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The Viola Stands Alone: The Rise in Sonatas and Suites for Unaccompanied Viola,

1915-1929

A document submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts
in Music

by

Jacob William Adams

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December 2014

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my parents, David and Martha. They instilled a passion for music and an intellectual curiosity early and often in my life. They helped me see the connections in things all around me, encouraged me to work hard and probe deeper, and to examine how seemingly disparate things can relate to one another or share commonalities. It is thanks to them and their never-ending love and support that I have been able to accomplish what I have. Mom and dad: thank you.

Vita of Jacob Adams

September 2014

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 - **“Northwest Focus Live” King 98.1 FM in Seattle**, 2014
 - **Concert Tour of Washington State**, Fall 2013
 - Yakima, Wenatchee, Chelan, Omak
- **Mercury Trio**, flute-viol-a-piano trio, 2012-present
 - **Occidental College**, 2013
 - **Hammer Museum at UCLA with wild Up**, 2012
- **A Far Cry Chamber Orchestra**, Fall 2012 US Tour
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 - **Teatro Municipale Valli** (Reggio Emilia, Italy: Borciani Competition Prizewinner, 2008)
 - **Takacs Quartet Series** (Guest Artist, Boulder, CO: 2007)
- **Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall** (Yale Chamber Music honoring composer Martin Bresnick, 2006)
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 - **Octet with St. Petersburg Quartet** (2001) Oberlin Conservatory Concert
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- **Coleman Chamber Music Competition Grand Prize**, Erato Quartet, 2001
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 - **Greater Bridgeport (CT) Symphony Orchestra**, guest principal, 2006-2008
 - **Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra**, principal and section viola, summer 2005
 - **Yale Philharmonia**, principal and section viola, 2004-07
 - **Huntington (WV) Symphony Orchestra**, principal viola, 2003-2004
 - **Oberlin Orchestra/Chamber Orchestra**, principal and section viola, 1999-2002
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 - **San Diego Symphony**, section sub list, 2011-present
 - **A Far Cry Chamber Orchestra**, guest artist, 2012-present
 - **Santa Barbara Symphony**, section sub list, 2012-present
 - **Opera Santa Barbara**, section viola, 2011-present
 - **Santa Barbara Chamber Symphony**, section sub, 2010-present
 - **New Haven (CT) Symphony Orchestra**, section viola, 2005-2009
 - **Hartford Symphony Orchestra**, section sub, 2008

- **Aspen Festival Orchestra, Sinfonia and Concert Orchestra**, Aspen, CO, 1996-98

Conductors played under include (alphabetically):

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Masterclasses and Collaborations

- **Cynthia Phelps**, *principal violist New York Philharmonic*, Santa Barbara, CA, January 2013
- **Helen Callus**, Duet concert and pre-concert lecture, Santa Barbara, CA, 2012, 2010
- **Juilliard String Quartet**, Santa Barbara, CA, 2010
- **Heiichiro Ohyama**, *Music Director of Santa Barbara Chamber Symphony & Former Principal Violist of LA Philharmonic*, Santa Barbara, CA, 2010
- **Yo-Yo Ma**, Santa Barbara, CA, 2009
- **Artemis String Quartet**, Weikersheim, Germany, 2008
- **Heime Muller**, *Former Violinist Artemis String Quartet*, Weikersheim, Germany, 2008
- **Joan Tower**, *composer*, Deer Valley, UT & Rhinebeck, NY, 2008
- **Muir String Quartet**, Deer Valley, UT 2008
- **Takacs String Quartet**, Stonybrook, NY, 2007 & Santa Barbara, CA, 2010-11
- **Barry Shiffman**, *Director of Banff Centre for the Arts & Former violinist of St. Lawrence String Quartet*, Banff, AB, 2007
- **Colorado String Quartet**, Cape Cod, MA, 2007
- **John Adams**, *composer and conductor*, New Haven, CT, 2007
- **Tokyo String Quartet**, New Haven, CT, 2005-7
- **Norman Fischer**, *Cello Professor Rice University & former cellist of Concord String Quartet*, Tanglewood 2005
- **Andrew Jennings**, *Violin Professor University of Michigan & Oberlin, former violinist of Concord String Quartet*, Tanglewood 2005
- **Paul Katz**, *Cello Professor New England Conservatory & former cellist of Cleveland String Quartet*, Tanglewood 2005
- **Juilliard String Quartet**, Tanglewood, MA, 2005
- **Krzysztof Penderecki**, *composer & conductor*, New Haven, CT, 2005
- **St. Petersburg String Quartet**, Oberlin, OH, 2000-2

Summer festivals

- **Manchester Summer Chamber Music**: *teacher and performer*, Manchester, MA, 2012-present & 2009
- **Incredible Children's Art Network Summer Session**: *teacher and conductor*, Santa Barbara, 2012-present

- **Music Academy of the West:** *Instrumental Program Coordinator*, Santa Barbara, CA, 2010-11
- **Weikersheim Schloss:** Weikersheim, Germany, 2008
- **Deer Valley Music Festival:** *Emerging Quartets and Composers*, Park City, UT 2008
- **Opera Theatre of Lucca:** *Guest chamber artist and coach*, Lucca, IT 1999, 2003, 2008
- **Banff Centre:** Banff, CA, 2007
- **Peaks to Plains Suzuki Institute:** *Faculty* Boulder, CO, 2007
- **Soundfest Institute:** *Chamber coach* Cape Cod, MA 2007
- **Tanglewood:** *viola fellow* 2005-6
- **Casalmaggiore International Festival:** Casalmaggiore, IT 1999, 2002
- **Henri Mancini Institute:** Los Angeles, CA 2001
- **Aspen Music Festival:** Aspen, CO 1996-98

Additional Relevant Work Experience

- **Program Notes**
 - **Longy School of Music Orchestra:** 2009-present
 - **Norfolk Music School and Festival:** 2009
 - **Manchester Summer Chamber Music:** 2009
 - **Concordia Chamber Players:** 2004-present
 - **Princeton Summer Festival:** 2005-present
 - **Yale Chamber Music Society:** 2004-2009
 - **Yale at Carnegie Hall Concerts:** 2006-2008
 - **Yale Philharmonia Concerts:** 2004-2009
 - **Takacs Quartet Series:** 2007
- **Pre-Concert Lectures**
 - **Kronos Quartet:** 2012
 - **Helen Callus Recital:** 2012
 - **Bach Project with Helen Callus:** 2010
 - **Vinca Quartet, various concerts:** 2007-2009
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 - **Co-founder & staff: Music Haven (www.musichavenct.org):** 2007-2008
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ABSTRACT

The Viola Stands Alone: The Rise in Sonatas and Suites for Unaccompanied Viola,

1915-1929

Jacob William Adams

The early twentieth century saw a remarkable boon in the amount of new repertoire being written for the viola as a solo instrument. Specifically, the rise in composing unaccompanied, multi-movement sonatas and suites for viola in these decades was noteworthy. This document came of a desire to probe deeper into the socio-cultural context of fin de siècle and interwar Europe, in order to better understand what factors might have contributed to this prolific output of repertoire for the genre. By exploring the works of several composers – specifically pieces by Max Reger, Paul Hindemith, and Ladislav Vycpálek – a conscious choice was made not to focus on any one composer, style, or individual piece. These solo viola works were not written in a vacuum, but were products of composers who were deeply embedded in the cultural milieu of their time. These composers and this genre needed placing within a larger socio-historical framework. Both the composers and their compositions are considered here as part of the interrelated culture of those heady years, when the emergent aesthetics of a variety of modernist strains – historicist modernism, neoclassicism, *neue sachlichkeit* to name a few – began to take root. Such an approach allows for unexpected connections and relationships between key figures and aesthetic concepts to materialize more readily, providing a vibrant portrait of the brash and often contradictory age that produced such a wealth of solo repertoire for a long-ignored instrument.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
I. <u>Contextualizing, Defining, and Identifying Neoclassicism</u>	6
The Problems and Shortcomings of the Term	6
Classicism and Historicism in the 19 th century and Fin de siècle	11
Origins of <i>le néoclassicisme</i> and <i>le nouveau classicisme</i>	15
Aesthetics as Cultural Elitism	19
Neoclassicist Aesthetics after World War I	22
Concluding Thoughts on Neoclassicism	24
II. <u>Eine Neue Klassizität: Historicist Modernism in Germany</u>	26
Back to Bach: mid-19 th Century Summary	26
Museum Pieces	28
Defining and Contextualizing Historicist Modernism	30
Bach to the Future	31
Putting the ‘Modernism’ in ‘Historicist Modernism’	33
III. <u>Examining the Aesthetics and Solo Viola Works of Max Reger</u>	35
Three Suites for Solo Viola, op. 131d	39
Reger’s Uneasy Reception	46
‘The Last Giant’	47
IV. <u>The Early Career of Paul Hindemith until 1929</u>	49
Hindemith as Emerging Composer	49
Hindemith as Virtuoso, the Amar Quartet	56
Hindemith as Expressionist?	61
Hindemith as Dadaist?	65
<i>Neue Sachlichkeit</i>	67
V. <u>Hindemith’s Sonata op. 25 no. 1 and Vycpálek’s Suite op. 21</u>	73

Hindemith, op. 25 no. 1	73
Mottos as Tonal Framework	75
Ladislav Černý and the Genesis of op. 25 no. 1	78
The (In)famous Fourth Movement	80
Černý's Impact: The Dissemination of op. 25 no. 1	82
Vycpálek: Career Background and Oeuvre	84
Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21	87
First movement – Moderato assai	88
Subsequent Movements	93
Concluding Thoughts	96
Bibliography	100
Appendix I – Musical Examples	103

The Viola Stands Alone: The Rise in Sonatas and Suites for Unaccompanied Viola, 1915-1929

Introduction

Ladislav Vycpálek's *Suite for Solo Viola*, Op. 21 is a little-known gem of the instrument's early twentieth century repertoire. Written in 1929, its four movements showcase the viola's idiomatic potency for dark expressivity, dramatic gesture, and virtuosic flair. Far from being a showpiece of superficial beauty, the *Suite* presents the instrument's capabilities in service of Vycpálek's compelling musical content. It is a work with many appealing qualities, and yet the Suite has mostly languished in obscurity – it has only been recorded twice on a classical label since its premiere.¹ This may be due in part to the composer's unfamiliarity; Vycpálek is mostly unknown beyond his native Czech Republic, and even there he is now a somewhat marginalized figure within the lineage of Czech composition.

In spite of the circumstances that have led Vycpálek and his *Suite* to be largely ignored or forgotten, even within the confines of the viola repertoire, this work and its now obscure composer serve as a convenient entry point into a larger examination of the emergent prominence of Suites and Sonatas written for solo string instruments in the first decades of the twentieth century, in particular those written for the viola. Vycpálek's work was written in the midst of a period in which the Suite or Sonata for unaccompanied string instruments was experiencing a flurry of interest not seen for nearly two hundred years. Before the early

¹ Czech violist Jitka Hosprová included the work on her album 'Monologue,' released in 2011 on the Supraphon label. Before that, the only recording was by Jaroslav Motlik, also on the Supraphon label.

twentieth century, one has to go back to the Partitas, Sonatas and Suites of J.S. Bach for unaccompanied violin and cello to locate such a wealth of substantial new works been written for solo string forces. This connection is not coincidental, either – these twentieth century works embodied the reverence and influence Bach's scores had for modern composers. In individualistic ways, they referenced, studied, or paid homage to Bach's contributions to the genre. Many were written for violin, some for cello, and most notably for present purposes, a sizable amount for solo viola – an instrument whose solo possibilities had long been overlooked or outright neglected.

The intention with this examination of selected works of the unaccompanied viola repertoire is to glean some common traits and through-lines within genre and era. While the solo string compositions of the early twentieth century were not limited to or defined by any single overriding National school or aesthetic sensibility, they shared a collective interest in reviving pre-Romantic forms and idioms – particularly Bach-inspired Baroque stylistic devices – with modernist sensibilities. Alongside this is the concurrent rise in original compositions for the viola, viewed, for the first time, as an instrument worthy of its own idiomatic solo repertoire.

To unpack the complex array of factors that contributed to such pre-Romantic interests among early twentieth century modernists, a broader historical lens is necessary. Numerous ideas and aesthetic strains concerning progress, modernism, and revivalism were in the zeitgeist of both fin de siècle and interwar Europe, sometimes with similar ideologies appearing simultaneously in disparate contexts. It is only within a sense of these socio-cultural factors that an understanding of individual composer's aesthetics and influences can be adequately observed.

In that spirit, the first two chapters of this study serve to contextualize how ‘the past’ had come to be viewed as a historicist construct in the fin de siècle era. It was in this incubator that aesthetic trends – which in turn promoted a renewed interest in the solo string sonata genre – were nurtured and developed. In these chapters, I summarize the nuances and ambiguities of how aesthetes and composers reconciled their highly ambiguous relationship with the past and its influence on contemporary trends.

Chapter 1 focuses specifically on the term neoclassicism – its origins in fin de siècle France and the problems and ambiguities that complicate its frequent usage. Scott Messing’s extensive scholarship serves as a jumping off point to illustrate how neoclassicism is the umbrella term most frequently and casually applied to any early twentieth century musical style that in some way – be it in form, genre, style or instrumentation – evokes pre-Romantic music. Yet as we will discover, neoclassicism actually has much more specific uses and applications, and the solo string repertoire’s revival does *not* in fact owe much to the (mostly) French origins of what became neoclassicism.

Chapter II turns its attention to Germany, where a more plausible backdrop for solo string music’s revival might be found. The ‘Back to Bach’ movement, which found its apex with the Historicist Modernism of Max Reger (a term coined by Walter Frisch), is sometimes misidentified as a peculiar offshoot of neoclassical inclinations, if not outright ignored as a strange outlier amongst the predominant fin de siècle German strains of chromaticism, atonality, and expressionism. These distinct cultural settings of France and Germany each re-defined modernism by choosing to either embrace or reject different aspects of the past. This led to the various strains that emerged: the French *le nouveau classicisme*, German historicist modernism, and the neoclassicism affiliated with Stravinsky in the 1920s. These various

currents help to contextualize the concurrent revitalization of the solo string repertoire in these decades.

Having detailed this backdrop of the different aesthetic strains in which early twentieth century modernism interacted with the past, Chapter III turns the focus to specific composers, their aesthetics, and their viola works. It begins with exploring Max Reger, the principal figure linked with Historicist Modernism. His *Three Suites for Solo Viola*, op. 131d are discussed, along with the general assimilation of Bach into his scores. After languishing in Anglo-American scholarship and reception for many decades, Reger's life and career are experiencing something of a fresh reassessment for his unique standing amongst the German modernists of the fin de siècle.²

Reger proved to be an influence on the life and work of Paul Hindemith, whose early stylistic development as a composer and performing career are examined in Chapter IV. Hindemith, an internationally renowned concertizing violist, composed four sonatas for solo viola (as well as numerous other chamber and concert works for the instrument), which remain keystone works of the instrument's repertoire. The influence of being an accomplished performer certainly had a central role in shaping the maturation and coalescence of what would become Hindemith's mature style – as the figurehead of the *neue Sachlichkeit* movement and its leading proponent of *Gebrauchsmusik*. This chapter highlights Hindemith's early career as a performer and the development of his compositional sound through to when his celebrated Amar Quartet disbanded in 1929.

² Walter Frisch believes Reger's music "has been vastly underappreciated in Anglo-American musicology." See Frisch, Walter. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005: 139. Leon Botstein echoes these sentiments: "That the music and career of Max Reger are once again attracting interest among scholars outside Germany is welcome." See Botstein, Leon. "History and Max Reger." *The Musical Quarterly*, 87/4 (Winter 2004): 622.

1929 also marks a convenient year to shift focus onto the composer and his piece that opened this introduction. Ladislav Vycpálek's marvelous and largely unknown *Suite for Solo Viola*, written in 1929, certainly owes something to Hindemith. If not necessarily written with the same philosophical bent as Hindemith, Vycpálek's *Suite* nevertheless illustrates the prominence of Hindemith's influence over the preceding decade – particularly as a composer for the viola. In Chapter V, an analysis of both Hindemith's op. 25 no. 1 Sonata and Vycpálek's *Suite* serves to explore this relationship. In the end, there is a call for championing Vycpálek's life and career. His music is certainly worthy of study and reappraisal beyond localized scholars and performers, in much the way Reger has recently experienced a revision and reassessment of his legacy.

This work is by no means intended to be a comprehensive study of the solo viola repertoire of this period. There is a good deal of repertoire that has not been included, which could readily provide fruitful exploration to another enterprising scholar. Those works and composers that are highlighted were chosen largely on the basis of establishing a contextual thread – a related philosophical outlook – that ties them to one another. Even within the repertoire covered here, the evaluations are far from complete in their score analysis or historical detail. This is by design, as the varied methodologies employed are being utilized in the service of operating on a much larger and more vibrant canvas of the topic. By putting these works and their composers into dialogue and relief with one another, the intention is to tap into the broader socio-cultural aesthetics and historical context that shaped the solo viola repertoire – indeed all of the solo string repertoire – from this period. Larger patterns and trends heretofore unexplored in this repertoire will emerge into clearer focus, and provide an alternative lens through which to explore and consider these works.

I. Contextualizing, Defining, and Identifying Neoclassicism

The Problems and Shortcomings of the Term

Of the various stylistic ‘-isms’ that were swirling in the consciousness of early twentieth century composers, one in particular stands out as requiring particular unpacking for our purposes. The label of neoclassicism can be rife with problems of an ambiguity and fluidity of meaning. The term can be dependent on the circumstances under which it is ascribed, who is applying the term, and for what end. In spite of any shifting definitions and cultural baggage, the term and its aesthetics must be unpacked and reckoned with, for its cultural prominence in the early twentieth century is unmistakable. While it has many shortcomings and is often dismissed as being wholly inadequate, it contains, as Richard Taruskin says, “enough truth to make it useful.” He says this while cautioning that, “Like most catchphrases, it will require a lot of qualification and amendment.”³

Like many such terms utilized by music historians, neoclassicism is “an approximate and unworked indication of the culture that produces it.”⁴ Any of these terms serve as an attempt to crystallize the ideas and pervasive aesthetic styles and values of an era – be the term “Baroque,” or “Renaissance,” or any of the 20th century “isms,” of which neoclassicism is surely one. Music history textbooks and musicians tend to simultaneously apply terms like this to both the compositional styles of specific artists and to the broader tendencies in the culture of the time. The desire to catalog persistent themes into era-specific contexts for some

³ Taruskin, Richard. *Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005: 448.

⁴ Messing, Scott. *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988: xiii.

sense of organizational clarity is an understandable impulse. So too is the resultant backlash to periodization and such umbrella terms by many specialists.⁵ Such scholarly resistance is also the result of witnessing the overuse, outright misuse, and ambiguity of meaning typically accompanying such a term. Without discretion, these terms can begin to mean anything and everything, and therefore mean nothing.

In the case of the term neoclassicism specifically, Scott Messing, one of the most prominent scholarly voices on the subject, identified the frustration felt by many with the term's paradoxical standing:

The presence of the term in studies of early twentieth-century music is so rife that most of the major figures composing during the first three decades of this century have been tied, loosely or umbilically, to it; yet a collation of usages produces such a variety of meaning that the expression seems to possess no syntactical weight whatsoever. Likewise, for every cautionary statement warning against using the term because of its ambiguity, there are many times it appears without any context other than the tacit assumption that the reader knows the precise connotation the author has intended for it.⁶

Messing identifies the usage of neoclassicism as tending towards macro- and micro-extremes, with nearly every instance taking up both meanings simultaneously. The macro-context is within a general landscape of early 20th century modernism, in which “neoclassicism is attended by a retinue of words such as clarity, simplicity, objectivity, purity, refinement, constructive logic, concision, sobriety, and so on.” The micro-context use

⁵ Messing cites several scholars (Keith Daniel, Antony Beaumont, Larry Sitsky, David Neumeyer) who, “When they articulate the concept of neoclassicism...invariably conclude that the term is woefully inappropriate or inadequate to their subject.” See Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, xiv, 155. The broader questions of how musicologists research and present historical narratives was thoroughly dissected in the 1990s and 2000s during and after the so-called “New Musicology” debates, in which the traditional time period categories and the lineage of ‘great’ composers was thoroughly questioned. See for instance Goehr, Lydia. “Writing Music History.” *History and Theory*, 31/2 (May 1992): 182-199 and Taruskin, Richard. “Introduction: The History of What?” in *Oxford History of Western Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005: xxi – xxx.

⁶ Messing, Scott. “Polemic as History: The Case of Neoclassicism.” *Journal of Musicology*, 9/4 (Autumn 1991): 481.

is with more stylistic specificity: “a work is said to be neoclassic if it employs musical means that borrow from, are modeled on, or allude to a work or composer from an earlier era, often from the eighteenth century, but equally from any composition regardless of period that has somehow entered into the canon of ‘great art.’⁷”

These two uses of the term fit into the common application of all such terms in music history, as described previously: being used both for broad, general cultural tendencies and the hyper-specificity of a given composer’s particular score. Even within the confines of the early twentieth-century, the combination of Messing’s two definitions comprise a vast quantity of music that could be construed as being in some way ‘neoclassical.’ The width of these parameters is what prompts many to urge against indiscriminate usage of the term, for its worth as an effective descriptor seems limited.

Yet the term neoclassicism still must be dealt with appropriately. It “has embedded itself securely in the parlance of studies of twentieth-century music.”⁸ Moreover, the term was widely used and written about during the time much of this music was being composed. This proved particularly true after Stravinsky’s *Octet*, when the term took on political and polemical associations within trends of modernism in the 1920s. It was not the case of an insufficient term being applied broadly to a historical era by later generations, as with terms such as “Baroque.” Composers of the early twentieth century were keenly aware of the term and the implications that had developed around its usage, especially after 1920. They actively chose to embrace or reject it.

⁷ Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, xiv. This is an important point of clarification: the neoclassical movement includes under its umbrella any deliberate musical reference to obsolete styles and forms of earlier eras, even if they do not fall under what is now commonly considered the ‘Classical Period’ of music history.

⁸ Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, xv.

So while acknowledging the limitations and shortcomings of the term neoclassicism, its use and evolution must be thoroughly considered because of its prominence in the aesthetic context of the early twentieth century. A crucial component to such consideration is examining the nascent stages of the term's development before its most common post-World War I affiliations. Messing reminds us that:

Neoclassicism did not spring, Athena-like, from the mind of either critic or composer nor did it vault instantly into common parlance. Rather, the handful of initial appearances at the turn of the century remained at the time isolated, unrelated, and distinct from later, post-war usage, gaining currency only after a repertoire existed to which it could convincingly be grafted.⁹

While there was only intermittent use of the term neoclassicism before the 1920s, there is a not-insignificant repertoire of music from the fin de siècle era that seems to “employ[s] musical means that borrow from, are modeled on, or allude to a work or composer from an earlier era.”¹⁰ Such works do not conform to the aesthetics or culture associated with 1920s neoclassicism. Being of pre-war Europe, these works were written in a profoundly different social context than post-war neoclassical works, and certainly do not carry the same polemical connotations. Messing argues that these cannot truly be called neoclassical works:

The treatment remained far too disparate to permit their elevation to the level of a dominant artistic trend, least of all one called neoclassic. Those elements of the pre-war tendency toward neoclassicism did not coalesce into the semblance of an integrated mode of expression because the uses of that material were different for each composer. The term neoclassicism is not acceptable for the historical unity of the first two decades of the twentieth

⁹ Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, xv.

¹⁰ Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, xiv.

century; individual styles resisted placement in historical closure, especially in an era where novelty was the prized hallmark.¹¹

The deliberate referencing of pre-Romantic styles and forms in fin de siècle era works invariably brings with it the desire to use the term neoclassical, especially because in retrospect we can recognize “the aesthetic alloy which they form¹²” with later neoclassical trends. But this is where a bit of larger historical perspective is necessary.

As Taruskin is quick to point out, “The deliberate imitation or revival of ‘ancient’ or obsolete musical styles for specific emblematic or expressive purposes has a history that goes back at least as far as the Renaissance.¹³” Already by the end of the eighteenth century, there was enough of a sense of both ‘historical’ and ‘modern’ perspectives on musical trends and fashion that composers could employ stylistic pastiche as “a form of exoticism.¹⁴” There was occasional nineteenth century music that referenced older forms, deliberately cultivating an “olden style,” which “was as plainly anachronistic to its practitioners as it is to us now.¹⁵” So there was precedent in music history for reviving older styles in new compositions. But the sheer volume of repertoire written in the fin de siècle with deliberate reference to past forms, styles, and composers requires a determination of what aspects specific to that era’s social culture led to such propensity for this music.

¹¹ Messing, 59.

¹² Messing, 59.

¹³ Taruskin, *OHWM*, 449.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Taruskin, 453-4. Worth noting is the Russian lineage here, which Stravinsky was surely conscious of: Anton Rubinstein’s Suite for piano, op. 38 (1855) featured Baroque movement titles, while his student Tchaikovsky composed four orchestral suites – the first of which featured two Baroque-inspired movements, the fourth of which is subtitled *Mozartiana* (1887). See Taruskin, 453-456. In France, Saint-Saëns and d’Indy were writing instrumental works utilizing seventeenth and eighteenth century dance idioms by 1877 as part of early fin de siècle efforts to revitalize the pre-nineteenth century French tradition. See Messing, 24-38.

Neoclassicism can be viewed as a result of early twentieth-century artists reconciling their role within an increasingly codified sense of history. Messing notes that, “the more objects of the past became authoritative icons during the nineteenth century, the more pressing seemed the responsibility for living artists to confront them.”¹⁶ To frame it another way, there could be no concept of neoclassicism unless there was a generally understood meaning of classicism.

Classicism and Historicism in the 19th century and Fin de siècle

‘Classical music’ as the term is used today...is the music in the ‘permanent collection,’ first defined around 1850.

-Richard Taruskin¹⁷

Historicism has its roots in the realization that a gap exists between the aspirations of the present and the imprint left upon the present by the past.

- Carl Dahlhaus¹⁸

The first usage of classicism as a term signifying that which is exemplary or authoritative within the fine arts occurred with nineteenth-century historians. These historians “were preoccupied with defining a collective, public past of European high culture” and with “characterizing...the art that should serve as models of perfection and greatness.”¹⁹ It is widely agreed among intellectual historians that the nineteenth century was

¹⁶ Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, xv-xvi.

¹⁷ Taruskin, *OHWM* Vol. III, 681-682.

¹⁸ Dahlhaus, Carl. “Historicism and Tradition” in *Foundations of Music History*. trans. J.B. Robinson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983: 53.

¹⁹ Messing, xv.

dominated – as no other period before or since – by a “historical sense;” the overriding notion of “comparing one’s own age with former ages.”²⁰

In the visual arts and in literature, classicism for nineteenth century historians harkened back to exemplary notions from prior eras, notably Greek and Roman antiquity.²¹ This specific association of classicism with Classical antiquity never translated to music, in part for practical reasons (no musical pieces from antiquity survive in written form) and in part for the recognition that, “music was subject to whims of taste and fashion that did not affect literature and the fine arts.”²² Given music’s diffuse nature as compared with the other arts, it is also important to note how the aesthetics of the term classicism were viewed within the discipline:

[In the 1880s-90s], classicism in music, while signifying a body of work that was superior and excellent, referred to compositions as early as those of Palestrina and as late as those of Schubert, depending on which country’s classicism was under discussion. The current common usage of classicism in music as referring specifically to the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven was only secured early in this [20th] century.²³

As the nineteenth century wore on, these historicist systems – the periodization of past eras based on Enlightenment principles, the hierarchy of aesthetics, the “historical sense” – became deeply embedded throughout European and American culture. So much so, writes Stephen Kern, that they:

had perhaps made their case too well. They showed how individuals or social forms had evolved out of their antecedents and were destined to recapitulate

²⁰ Dale, Peter Allan. *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History*. Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1977: 2-3.

²¹ See for instance: Dale, *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History*, 236-245.

²² Messing, xvi.

²³ Ibid.

what had gone before. The present thus seemed predetermined and smothered by the past...many artists and intellectuals were sharply critical of this overbearing historicism and shared a fear that the dominion of the past would impoverish response to the present and dry up resources for the future.²⁴

Combining the technological advances of the late nineteenth century (photography, Edison's phonograph, and cinema, for instance) with Freud's breakthroughs in psychoanalysis, the late nineteenth century saw people re-examining notions of memory, the past, and time in new ways. Collectivized, historicized, notions of such concepts gave way to increasingly personalized accounts.²⁵ This led to a reconciling and questioning of each individual's personal relationship to the monumental past, which historicist sensibilities had erected around them. An increasingly vocal group of philosophers and artists of the era "rejected it with passion and condemned the way the past can overwhelm the present."²⁶

One notable and relatively early example of this rejection of nineteenth century historicism occurs in Friedrich Nietzsche's 1874 essay, *The Use and Abuse of History*. While acknowledging the need for a certain level of historical knowledge, he warns about "excessive pondering over what has gone before." Nietzsche accused the entire age of suffering from a "malignant historical fever, and [Nietzsche] was particularly incensed by those who are chained to precedent and bowed under the weight of an ever heavier accumulation of memory and tradition."²⁷

²⁴ Kern, Stephen. *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1983: 61.

²⁵ Kern, 36-45, 61-64.

²⁶ Kern, 51.

²⁷ Kern, 52.

Writing thirty-five years later, Fillippo Marinetti, the outspoken member of the radical Italian Futurists, wrote a manifesto expressing their intent to “destroy the museums and the academies and to free the land from ‘its smelly gangrene of old professors, archaeologists, ciceroni and antiquarians.’” For the Futurists, anything “consecrated by time” was open to mockery and flippant abuse.²⁸

But this disdain for all things of ‘the past’ can also be viewed within the fin de siècle era’s overriding conviction that society was overrun with disorder and anarchy. Walter Frisch highlights the concept of degeneration, which was circulating as early as the 1850s and:

took hold still more firmly in the 1890s, most famously in Max Nordau’s book of 1892, *Entartung* (‘Degeneration’). Here culture (including musical culture) is seen as being in decline because of a physiological decay of the human brain and nervous system.²⁹

Often defined by the decadence and degeneration that preceded World War I, “society at the turn of the century was not so much decaying as bursting with new tensions and accumulated energies.”³⁰ With the rapid changes of the era and the arrival of a new century, historian Peter Gay notes that many reacted with a sense of bewilderment, or even despair:

In country after country, decade after decade, progressive and conservative voices alike lamented the unsettled, unsettling state of their age. They detected an alarming lack of anchorage, a universal anarchy of thought, an unhealthy speed of existence, a general uneasiness and vacillation in the very midst of irresistible scientific advance.³¹

²⁸ Kern, 57.

²⁹ Frisch, Walter. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 139.

³⁰ Tuchman, Barbara. *The Proud Tower*. New York: Macmillan, 1966: xvii.

³¹ Gay, Peter. *The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984: 60.

It is this state of affairs that is often simplified as the “decadence” of the *fin de siècle* – the zeitgeist of the era being an exaggerated and often neurotic display of emotion, stemming from the perception of an increasingly chaotic society.³² This manifested itself within the world of aesthetics and music in a myriad of ways, as we shall observe.

Origins of le néoclassicisme and le nouveau classicisme

Within this context of what the term ‘classicism’ implied for aesthetes and historians in the *fin de siècle*, the term neoclassicism began to emerge in different ways. Turn-of-the-century French aesthetes were the inventors of the terms *le néoclassicisme* and *le nouveau classicisme*.³³ The distinction of these terms is important, for they were used towards very different ends at the time. *Néoclassicisme* characterized a style artists did not want to be associated with; it was used in a derogatory sense towards that which was deemed banal or derivative (and, this being the French, usually of German origin). *Le nouveau classicisme*, on the other hand, spoke to the French desire to resurrect their proud, pre-nineteenth century musical tradition by returning to ‘classical’ aesthetics in the *fin de siècle* era.

Le nouveau classicisme grew out of a society in which the nineteenth century historicist systems were both suffocating and propelling every aesthetic impulse. The French viewed the nineteenth century narrative as being heavily biased towards a German-centric view of music history.³⁴ Moreover, there was a strong sense of the pervasive influence of

³² Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 1-2.

³³ Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 151.

³⁴ A good example of this Franco-Germanic tension within a nineteenth-century musical context occurs around the view of Bach. While Schumann and Mendelssohn famously found Bach’s scores revelatory in the 1830s and 1840s, Berlioz had a decidedly different take: “They [the Germans] believe in Bach, they worship him. It never

Germanic sensibilities in contemporary music, at the expense of any other national or regional musical traditions. Claude Debussy summarized this frustration in 1903: “One side is blinded by the last rays of the Wagnerian sunset, and the other frantically holds onto the neo-Beethovenian formulae bequeathed by Brahms.”³⁵

In spite of his quips, Debussy was far from immune to the power of Wagnerian sway. A much-quoted letter to fellow composer Ernest Chausson in 1893 references “the ghost of old Klingsor,” the magician from *Parsifal*, who “during the writing of *Pelléas et Mélisande* forced the composer, after a sleepless night, to destroy part of the score.”³⁶ Chabrier, another prominent French composer of the fin de siècle, wrote in rapturous terms upon hearing *Parsifal* in 1889 – “astonishing...I have heard nothing to equal it. It is sublime from start to finish.”³⁷

The acknowledgement of Wagner’s power of influence over French composers in the fin de siècle was a double-edged sword. It was also perceived as a threat to independent creativity and a distinctly French tradition. Debussy referred to Wagner and his widespread sphere of influence as “a beautiful sunset mistaken for a dawn.” Vincent d’Indy called for a reclaiming of the French tradition “to rest from too complex music, to return to simplicity,

for a moment occurs to them that his divinity could be questioned...the very idea is unthinkable.” Hector Berlioz, *Memoirs*, trans. and ed. David Cairns. New York: Knopf, 1969: 333. As referenced in Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 192.

³⁵ Debussy, *Debussy on Music*. Trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith. New York: Knopf, 1977: 86. As referenced in Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 24.

³⁶ Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 5. For detailed analysis of Wagner’s influence on *Pelléas et Mélisande* see also Holloway, Robin. *Debussy and Wagner*. London: Eulenberg, 1979: 60-78.

³⁷ Messing, 5-6.

but not to poverty.³⁸” These sentiments were part of a wider move among those concerned with preserving and protecting French culture:

Even as the [Wagnerian] infatuation reached its zenith, a reaction was swiftly finding its expression in a growing belief that the artistic products of the nineteenth century were bloated and redundant, and...that this excess was the responsibility of the northern, Teutonic mentality. Such exclusive myopia was consistent with gradual political tensions between France and Germany.³⁹

Existing within a milieu that cast the recent musical past in Germanic terms, and influenced by always simmering political tensions and a sense of national identity, the French sought to devise terminology to champion alternative notions of aesthetic value in music. These alternatives, not coincidentally, would serve to revive the French musical tradition, which had been interrupted by most of the nineteenth century and its excessive sense of Teutonic historicism. They found solace from the German sphere of influence by basing these aesthetic values on “a nostalgic evocation of a moribund style,” embracing their own French-revisionist historicism.

The reaction against Wagnerian influence led to an aesthetic based in a loosely defined collection of so-called ‘classical’ traits. These could just as easily be read as non-German, non-Romantic traits: “clarity, simplicity, austerity, sobriety, pure construction, precision, discreet harmony, and formal perfection.” As Debussy articulated, “French music is clarity, elegance, and declamation both simple and natural.”⁴⁰ These traits are seen in much of the pre-war French music that is considered *nouveau classicisme*. Crucially, by employing recognizable conventions derived from pre-nineteenth century repertoire, composers were

³⁸ Messing, 11.

³⁹ Messing, 6.

⁴⁰ Messing, 10-12, 151.

able to rely on their audiences' ability to identify familiar, clichéd rhythmic and melodic gestures to make appropriate musical and cultural connotations.⁴¹

While this revitalization of a pre-nineteenth century French tradition retrospectively seems like what is today considered neoclassicism, this was most certainly not the term any French composer of the time would have used for what they were doing. The first use of the term neoclassicism was not in celebrating this French musical revival of earlier styles. Instead, *néoclassicisme* was coined by French writers and used in a derogatory sense to criticize contemporary German musicians. It was not used to describe the Wagnerians, but those like Brahms, who “perpetuated the forms of instrumental music made popular during the eighteenth century, but who sacrificed originality and depth of musical substance for the abject imitation of structure.”⁴²

Especially after 1900, “favorable acceptance of German music by French composers became increasingly inadmissible.” Prominent French composers and critics were frequently excoriating the music of Brahms, Mahler, Schumann, and so on. For them, “neoclassicism represented the most banal and stifling treatment of the past by German musicians.” Worth noting here too is that young Stravinsky – the future torchbearer of the term – was in Paris amidst this attitude in the years prior to World War I, and held an anti-German stance analogous to his fellow Parisian artists.⁴³

⁴¹ Messing, 59.

⁴² Messing, 14.

⁴³ See Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 12-17, for many choice quotes of prominent French critics and composers complaining about contemporary German music during this period. Paul Dukas refers to “scholastic outlines” from the “imitation of Beethoven” which, “continue to grow every year out of respect for useless traditions.” D’Indy accuses of “oppressive tonal clumsiness so frequent in the works of Brahms and the German

Aesthetics as Cultural Elitism

The French opinion on German influence only worsened with the advent of World War I. Now their worst perceptions of German cultural excess and political intentions appeared to be coming true. Debussy complained:

We [the French] have failed to cultivate our garden, but on the other hand we have given a warm welcome to any foreign salesman who cared to come our way... We tolerated overblown orchestras, tortuous forms, cheap luxury and clashing colors, and we were about to give the seal of approval to even more suspect naturalizations when the sound of gunfire put a sudden stop to it all.⁴⁴

These can be read as veiled denouncements of Mahler, Strauss, and possibly Schoenberg. By 1915, Debussy was swept up in wartime fervor when he wrote to Stravinsky:

In these last years, when I felt the Austro-German miasma extending into the arts, I would have liked to have more authority, in order to cry out in distress and warn of the danger confronting us... How did we fail to see that these people were attempting to destroy our art, as they prepared the destruction of our countries?⁴⁵

Distinguishing along such nationalistic lines, while an understandable impulse during wartime, ignores the reality that many of the descriptors affiliated with French music could

neoclassicists." Stravinsky described Mahler's Eighth Symphony in 1913 as "the rigidity of an absolute, bare-faced dullness."

⁴⁴ Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, 322-23. As referenced in Messing, 44.

⁴⁵ Stravinsky, Igor. *Selected Correspondence*, ed. Robert Craft, 3 vols. New York: Knopf, 1985: 3:8. As referenced in Messing, 44. To be fair to Debussy's xenophobic dismissal of Germans, Max Reger seemed to fall under this stereotype at the time. Reger's "jingoism at the outbreak of World War I is shockingly naïve, in both his music and his correspondence." See Reinhold Brinkmann and Antonius Bittmann, "A 'Last Giant in Music': Thoughts on Max Reger in the Twentieth Century," *The Musical Quarterly* 87/4 (Winter 2004): 632-633.

be applied to a good deal of German music as well.⁴⁶ The English writer Ernest Newman, perhaps weary of the squabbling on both sides, noted in 1917:

It is the circumstances, not racial germs, that have determined the different ideals that French and German music have set before them. The danger of selecting a few mental traits and elevating them to the dignity of national characteristics is that composers may feel it their duty to try to live up to them, to the damage of their own originality, which may really have quite a different orientation.⁴⁷

The profound horrors of the Great War led to a desire to strip away any of the perceived excesses or decadence that had contributed to the culture that had culminated in World War. After the war, the influential writer and critic Jean Cocteau began shifting avant-garde French aesthetics away from Debussy and Ravel and towards Erik Satie. While Cocteau's language used to promote Satie's music evokes pre-war descriptions of *nouveau classicisme* – the new French classical tradition – Satie was set apart from other composers for not attaining this path by reaching back into the past. Cocteau also emphasized that Satie's music "owed nothing to a national tradition." Satie's so-called 'new simplicity' was "both 'classic' and 'modern'; 'a French music' that did not recall any other French music."⁴⁸

Though Cocteau was championing Satie in part for his lack of allegiance to a national tradition, the presence of cultural elitism in the aesthetics of the age – particularly anti-German xenophobia – was palpable. While the seeds of this polemical position were sown in fin de siècle France, as has already been observed, they blossomed in this decade:

⁴⁶ This will be addressed in the next chapter with the Historicist Modernism trend in Germany during the fin de siècle.

⁴⁷ Ernest Newman, "The New French Recipe," *Musical Times*, 1 October 1917: 441 as referenced in Messing, 75, 172. Messing notes that "Newman's apparent neutrality may have arisen from his awkward position as a critic writing in an allied country and who much preferred German music to that of France."

⁴⁸ Messing, 77-79.

Nineteenth-century German romantics had absolutely no place in the health of post-war French aesthetics. This concept cannot be dismissed lightly, for the essential anti-nineteenth-century German posture of neoclassicism in the 1920s was fundamental to the perception of a wrenching dichotomy in modern music [i.e. the Stravinsky and Schoenberg camps].⁴⁹

Darius Milhaud held a characteristic, if easily disputed, opinion on the cultural distinction between “diatonic Latins” and “chromatic Teutons” when he wrote in 1923 that:

We in Europe are actually in front of two absolutely opposed currents...The musicians of France and those of Austria have been isolated by the Great War; six years without any possible contact, during which the new tendencies of music have taken root on both sides...Diatonicism and chromaticism are the two poles of musical expression. One can say that the Latins are diatonic and the Teutons chromatic.⁵⁰

While indicative of larger, unsavory tensions and prejudices between cultures, this sensibility was widely held by non-German artists and intellectuals of the post-war years. Taruskin points out that, “part of the postwar cult of irony, certainly on the part of “Allied” composers, was de-Germanification.⁵¹” While Paris was the hub of this mentality, and the French its most outspoken proponents, it was a stance that others justified attaching themselves to via unsubstantiated claims. Stravinsky, for instance, wrote in 1917 that, “the soul of Latins is closer to us Slavs than the soul of Anglo-Saxons, not to mention the Germans.⁵²” The anti-German sense of cultural elitism, expressed widely and by many prominent artists of the movement, is a necessary component to consider in examining the aesthetics of neoclassicism.

⁴⁹ Messing, 123.

⁵⁰ Messing, 124.

⁵¹ Taruskin, *OHWM*, 506.

⁵² Messing, 119.

Neoclassicist Aesthetics after World War I

While *nouveau classicisme* and *néoclassicisme* were used distinctly and with separate meanings up through World War I, in the years after the war, “the definitions of these expressions had become thoroughly indistinct.”⁵³ The term neoclassicism was first used in the manner it is used today by critic Boris de Schloezer, writing in February 1923 about Stravinsky’s *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*. Notably, Schloezer’s article appeared before Stravinsky’s *Octet* was completed in May 1923 – the piece typically viewed as the watershed moment for neoclassicism’s paradigmatic style. He is also the first to apply the term to Stravinsky, who in the following decade became its figurehead and foremost practitioner:

M. Wiéner [concert organizer] is personally inclined toward Stravinsky and that which one would be able to call neoclassicism, if this term had not been distorted from its original meaning... This art does not pursue feeling or emotion; but it attains grace infallibly by its force and by its perfection.⁵⁴

Schloezer references the fact that neoclassicism had developed pejorative connotations – mainly around German instrumental music – in the *fin de siècle* era, which may have contributed to his feeling at liberty to reclaim the term. Neoclassicism, as it came to be identified with Stravinsky, attained a rhetoric that has become commonly associated with the term ever since: stylistic pastiche, mannerisms, simplicity, and objectivity. While Stravinsky’s neoclassical period is a bountiful topic all its own, it is of only peripheral

⁵³ Messing, 87.

⁵⁴ Boris de Schloezer, “La musique,” *Revue contemporaine*, 1 February 1923: 257 as quoted in Messing, 87 and Taruskin, 469.

interest for our purposes, primarily for the way it shaped the modernist rhetoric of neoclassicism after 1920.⁵⁵

Messing reminds that, “Not a single composer after World War I was indifferent toward the past.⁵⁶” The modern artist of the postwar 1920s was to “give unambiguous preference to irony over sincerity” and this choice meant, “the rejection of the immediate past, a true break with tradition.⁵⁷” Taruskin identifies this development as the true beginning of modernism and the 20th century aesthetic, with deliberate quotations and references to pre-Romantic styles as a conscious artistic stance, rejecting the lineage of the recent past.

There are, naturally, multiple levels of irony within the 1920s-era modern artist’s embrace of irony. The term neoclassicism – which only fifteen years earlier was being used to denigrate nineteenth-century German lineage – was now utilized as an aesthetic term of modernist approval, and a convenient avenue for the public to access the irony-laden ethos of 1920s modernism. Stravinsky’s own halting embrace of the term – using it for self-serving purposes at times and dismissing it with outright contempt at other times – reveals the concern and frustration of the time. Articulating one’s artistic stance in the post-war culture proved highly desirable, yet there was not adequate vocabulary to indicate a central direction forward in composition.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Critics and historians differ on which Stravinsky score was the starting point of his neoclassical period, with most citing *Pulcinella* (1920) or the *Octet* (1923). This disagreement points to the fact that in hindsight, it becomes more evident that Stravinsky’s scores after *The Rite of Spring* mark a gradual departure rather than a radical shift in style towards neoclassicism. See Messing, 87-117, 152-154.

⁵⁶ Messing, 152.

⁵⁷ Taruskin, *OHWM*, 467.

⁵⁸ Messing, 153.

Concluding Thoughts on Neoclassicism

It is worth reiterating the difference in the term's political implications between the turn-of-the-century French aesthetes and musicians pre-World War I who initially coined the term, and the Stravinsky-led neoclassical influence of the 1920s, post-World War I. While the French sought to reclaim their musical primacy by circumventing the Germanic legacy of the recent past, it was largely a sense of their own fading nationalism within nineteenth-century historicist constructs that motivated them to create the term. They sought less to consciously break from the entirety of the recent past in favor of more distant pasts. Instead, they sought to break from the specific stranglehold of recent German influence – be it Wagner, Brahms, or Mahler – on their own composers, and to break from the historical narrative of a predominant Germanic musical legacy, which discounted the contributions of their countrymen. After World War I, the choice to reject the immediate past outright, and therefore reject the horrors that past had wrought in the war, was far more widely embraced in artistic circles. It was post-World War I that the term – while still French-inspired, and with a decidedly anti-German cultural bias – took on a much more cosmopolitan, modernist sensibility.

Messing concludes that part of the term's power and appeal lies in its fluidity of usage:

If the theoretical apparatuses that have illuminated twentieth-century styles have encouraged us to hold the term neoclassicism in contempt because of its ambiguity, it must be realized that that same frustrating lack of clarity in the word was the source of its attraction and the reason for its survival.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Messing, Scott. "Polemic as History: The Case of Neoclassicism." *Journal of Musicology*, 9/4 (Autumn 1991): 497.

Defining neoclassicism necessarily requires an acceptance of its broad and paradoxical nature. It existed in a perpetual tension between “order and freedom, continuity and innovation, and tradition and novelty.”⁶⁰ It is a uniquely twentieth-century phenomenon, of both pre- and post- World War I culture, which reflected and refracted the aesthetic concerns of both worlds. Its fluidity of usage is reflected not only in its widely differing implications for fin de siècle Europe and for interwar Europe, but in its accommodations to both innovation and tradition. For composers weary of and burdened by the recent past and seeking to reconcile their role within the continuum of historical lineage, it offered a convenient buzzword to occupy both spheres – embracing the new by championing long-moribund traditions of the past.

⁶⁰ Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, xvi.

II. Eine Neue Klassizität⁶¹: Historicist Modernism in Germany

The previous chapter served as a summary of how the term neoclassicism originated and came to carry the cultural and aesthetic connotations it does. It was very much based in a French, anti-German conceit – as seen particularly in the derogatory use of *le néoclassicisme* to describe most German instrumental music in the fin de siècle, and the postwar sense of cultural elitism that caused many artists and aesthetes to dismiss all things German. But the French desire to re-connect to their pre-Romantic music lineage with *le nouveau classicisme* was not alone in this period. There was an equally strong impulse in Germany to see Modernist aesthetics emerge out of a re-connecting with the pre-Romantic past – what Walter Frisch called ‘Historicist Modernism.’⁶² This chapter will explore the cultural currents in Germany around this sensibility that arose in parallel to the evolution of Neoclassicism examined in the previous chapter.

Back to Bach: mid-19th Century Summary

The key distinction between Germany’s aesthetic developments evoking the past in the Wilhelmine era (1871-1918) and the fin de siècle French efforts to re-establish their national tradition with *le nouveau classicisme* lies in the historical lineage – real or perceived – and its stance within the cultures. Unlike the French, who believed that their musical culture fell long dormant after the glory of Rameau and Couperin, Germans in the nineteenth

⁶¹ *Eine Neue Klassizität*, or ‘A new classicism,’ was a phrase coined by novelist Thomas Mann in a 1911 essay. Both the term and its motivation bear a striking resemblance to the desire to escape the shadow of Wagnerism and break from recent traditions that led the French to *le nouveau classicisme*. See Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 62-65.

⁶² Frisch, Walter. “Reger’s Bach and Historicist Modernism.” *Nineteenth Century Music*, 25/2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-02): 296.

century saw Bach's music ever present, his genius looming large (along with Beethoven) over all living composers.

Certainly this situates things long prior to any turn-of-the-twentieth century concerns not yet manifest. Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* premiered in 1824.⁶³ His late sonatas and quartets featured Bachian counterpoint, complete with implications of the restorative power of this older music.⁶⁴ It was 1829 when the twenty-year-old Mendelssohn conducted the *St. Matthew Passion* in Berlin. While that particular event has been perhaps overstated as a moment of revivalism by some historical narratives, it certainly coincided with a renewed interest in oratorio and choral traditions in nineteenth-century Germany.⁶⁵ Assessments of Bach's legacy corresponded with the emergent and potent sensibilities of nineteenth-century historicism.⁶⁶ Mendelssohn's own compositions began championing a "stylistic retrospectivism" that utilized historical sensibilities to further a growing sense of cultural nationalism.⁶⁷ German nationalism was soon thereafter subsumed by Wagnerian sentiments, which served to dichotomize the formal structures and musical lineages championed by Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms as conservative, while the chromaticism and programmatic elements of Wagner and his numerous disciples were labeled as progressive.⁶⁸

⁶³ Kirkendale, Warren. "New Roads to Old Ideas in Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis." *The Musical Quarterly* 56/4 (October 1970): 665-701.

⁶⁴ Frisch, Walter. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005: 143.

⁶⁵ Veit, Patrice. "Bach à Berlin en 1829: une 'redécouverte'?" *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 62e Année, No. 6 (Nov – Dec, 2007): 1347-1386.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 1, 9-12.

⁶⁷ See Taruskin, *OHWM* Vol. III, 166-177, especially 168.

⁶⁸ This dichotomy has been thoroughly undermined as being far more fluid and ambiguous than the dominant historical narratives would have us believe. As but one example, David Brodbeck and Michael Musgrave have

The same music the French criticized as examples of *le néoclassicisme* was likewise disdained by pro-Wagner New Germans, who saw it as outmoded, if not obsolete.⁶⁹

Museum Pieces

Behind Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn, now Gluck, Handel, and Bach have risen again as the first great masters of the most recent past. And behind them Palestrina and Lasso rise up in turn as witnesses of a period that lies still further in the past, and the greatness of whose music, which at first sounds strange to us, must be, and will be, exemplary for the music of the present and future, just as the art of the Renaissance and Antiquity are for the visual arts.

-Hugo Riemann, 1908⁷⁰

Facing such charges from the Wagnerian progressives and the fin de siècle French, German composers of traditional instrumental forms in the second half of the nineteenth century were inculcated by the pervasive historicism that had gradually enveloped all of the fine arts. While introducing this historicism within nineteenth century culture last chapter, its direct impact on music was not dissected in detail. William Weber first introduced the telling statistic that at the turn-of-the-nineteenth century, about eighty percent of music performed was by living composers. After 1870, about eighty percent of the performed music was by dead or ‘ancient’ composers.⁷¹ A museum culture therefore developed within concert halls,

noted the Wagnerian elements within Brahms’ Third Symphony, something J.A. Fuller-Maitland recognized even at the time. See David Brodbeck, “Brahms, the Third Symphony, and the New German School,” in *Brahms and His World*. Walter Frisch, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 65-78.

⁶⁹ This was the bold declaration Wagner made about all purely instrumental music in the wake of Beethoven’s Ninth in *The Artwork of the Future*. See Taruskin, *OHWM* Vol. III, 675.

⁷⁰ Hugo Riemann, “Degeneration und Regeneration in der Musik” as quoted in Walter Frisch, “Reger’s Bach and Historicist Modernism,” *Nineteenth Century Music* 25/2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-02): 301.

⁷¹ Weber, William. “Mass Culture and the Reshaping of Musical Taste, 1770-1870,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* VIII (1977): 15. The remainder of Weber’s article summarizes how serious musicians in this era reacted to the predominant musical tastes of seemingly shallow virtuosity like that of

where it remained throughout the entire twentieth century and has continued into the twenty-first century.⁷² As J. Peter Burkholder points out, it also permeated the mindset of all young composers:

A young composer of this time [generations from Brahms forward] had not only living models but dead and deified ones, whose importance in the tradition was emphasized by their having survived the fabled ‘test of time’...young composers could and did devote themselves to perfecting their craft – which meant learning technique from the ‘masters’ of composition – and developing a distinctive personal style.

In short, young composers modeled their activities on what they perceived composers of previous eras to have done: they sought to create music in the tradition of art music which would say something new, while incorporating what was best and most useful from the music of the past. Surrounded by museum pieces, they sought to create museum pieces...Communication with an audience became secondary as the ideal of creating music of lasting value became paramount.⁷³

The contradiction was proving untenable: the demoralizing prospect for a living composer was that they could never in their lifetime attain the lofty, unsurpassable achievements of past masters – with whom they were competing in the real world market for concertizing and compensation opportunities – in spite of Romanticism’s call for perpetual progress and renewal of artistic means.⁷⁴ It also created the persona of the modern composer

Spohr and Hummel with an increase in connoisseurship that led to the emergence of ‘masters’ and ‘masterpieces.’ Entertainment and spectacle became akin to a lecture, with requisite background knowledge and concentration required to gain entry. See Weber, 5-21.

⁷² See Taruskin, *OHWM*, 676-682.

⁷³ Burkholder, J. Peter. “Museum Pieces: the Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years,” *Journal of Musicology* 2/2 (Spring 1983): 119-120.

⁷⁴ Taruskin, *OHWM*, 681.

as a highly self-conscious artist, which Burkholder defines as “composers obsessed with the musical past and with their place in music history.”⁷⁵

Defining and Contextualizing Historicist Modernism

Not coincidentally, Burkholder’s definition of a modern composer as a highly self-conscious artist was in reference specifically to Brahms, who proved to be a seminal figure in the development of Historicist Modernism. His compositions often employed techniques of the remote past in the service of his original and expressive language. The *German Requiem*, as but one example, is doused in the study of Bach’s cantatas and his treatments of chorales.⁷⁶ The *Symphony No. 4* finale, a passacaglia, is another example of Brahms utilizing historical models for contemporary ends.⁷⁷ For Brahms, the music of the past was not merely a crutch to lean on or a burden to uphold, but a source of creative stimulus.

In coining the term Historicist Modernism, Frisch urges an account of Austro-German music in the period between the death of Wagner and the start of World War I (1885-1915) that is not focused solely on chromaticism and atonality as the barometers of emergent modernism. Historicist modernism is often overlooked in discussions of modernist trends of the era, if not outright dismissed as “a conservative historicism or neoclassicism in the

⁷⁵ Burkholder, J. Peter. “Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music,” *Nineteenth-Century Music* 8/1 (Summer 1984): 81.

⁷⁶ See for instance: Musgrave, Michael. “Historical Influences in the Growth of Brahms’s ‘Requiem.’” *Music and Letters* 53/1 (January 1972): 3-17.

⁷⁷ Frisch notes that the passacaglia movement “had a profound impact on subsequent composers. Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Reger and Zemlinsky all wrote pieces modeled after or partially inspired by the Brahms’s finale.” Frisch, “Reger’s Bach and Historicist Modernism.” *Nineteenth Century Music*, 25/2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-02): 297.

trajectory of a neo-Brahmsian notion of ‘absolute’ music.⁷⁸ Frisch identifies Historicist Modernism as a distinct thread of fin de siècle German modernism, contrasting it with what became neoclassicism:

music written in the years around 1900 that derives its compositional and aesthetic energy not primarily from an impulse to be New, but from a deep and sophisticated engagement with music of the past...

Often brash and cosmopolitan – and self-consciously *au courant* – neoclassicism has tended to overshadow historicist modernism, an earlier and soberer, but equally fascinating, phenomenon.⁷⁹

It “uses musical techniques from the remote past...as a way of achieving distance from late Romantic styles.” It is “not nostalgic or conservative in any traditional sense” and “represents an attempt to bridge a historical gap without denying it, collapsing it, or retreating over it to return to the past.”⁸⁰

Bach to the Future

The ‘music of the past’ for German composers to engage with most singularly was the music of J.S. Bach. As mentioned earlier, Bach had been ever-present as a deified master in the museum culture as it evolved throughout the nineteenth century. But attitudes and reception of Bach shifted around 1900, when “Bach began to edge out Beethoven as a principal model for many composers in Austria and Germany.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Botstein, Leon. “History and Max Reger,” *The Musical Quarterly* 87/4 (Winter 2004): 622.

⁷⁹ Frisch, Walter. “Reger’s Bach and Historicist Modernism.” *Nineteenth Century Music*, 25/2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-02): 296.

⁸⁰ Frisch, Walter. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 139.

⁸¹ Frisch, 297.

Bach had long since been held up as an embodiment of the German spirit, and his music was linked with a deep sense of cultural identity.⁸² The first two decades of the twentieth century, though, saw a host of publications freshly assessing and advocating for Bach's position within the modern world. The notion that Bach's music had special and healing qualities began to appear with greater frequency: it was depicted as restorative, calming, and clarifying. This spoke to the larger cultural zeitgeist alluded to in the previous chapter – that fin de siècle society was tumultuous, chaotic, and sick. Bach was seen as providing an antidote.⁸³

The rapid advances in industrialization, urbanization and modernization were of concern to many artists and intellectuals in the fin de siècle. Those who promoted and sought solace with the music of Bach were in line with the broader ideals of the Life Reform movement (*Lebensreformbewegung*). The term Life Reform, as defined by Lee Rothfarb, “is an expression that arose around 1900 to describe yearning for cultural reform that reach back to the early decades of the 1800s and peak in the Wilhelmine period [1871-1918].⁸⁴” The

⁸² The exclusivity with which Germans laid claim to Bach understandably frustrated others, in particular Ferruccio Busoni. Though Italian by birth, Busoni engaged intensively with Bach and made his professional career in the German-speaking world. He sought “to universalize Bach – in a sense to de-Germanize him. He may have done so in part in reaction to figures like Reger for whom Bach was quintessentially German.” Busoni is quoted as saying he wishes he “knew what German profundity in music were.” See Frisch, 173 – 180.

⁸³ Wilibald Nagel in 1901 writes of “Bach as healthy, as restorative within a culture that was seen by many as decadent or sick.” Albert Schweitzer emphasizing the comforting aspect, to “help our age to attain the spiritual unity and fervor of which it so sorely stands in need.” August Halm describes Bach themes in terms of their generative powers and *Lebenskraft* (‘life force’). Ernst Kurth finds “kinetic energy” in Bach passages. See Frisch, 296-299 and Frisch, “Bach, Regeneration and Historicist Modernism” in *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 138-154.

⁸⁴ Rothfarb, Lee A. *August Halm: A Critical and Creative Life in Music*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009: x.

stance among proponents of Life Reform – mostly educated middle-class Germans – was anti-Modernist, with “nostalgia for an idealized (and absolutized) past.”⁸⁵

Putting the ‘Modernism’ in ‘Historicist Modernism’

Much like with dissecting neoclassicism in the previous chapter, to be ‘anti-Modernist,’ as the Life Reformers were, requires a broad acceptance in the era of how Modernity and Modernism were defined. In truth, the Life Reformers were opposed to the qualities of their present era – modernity. Unlike modernity, which speaks to a condition of being, modernism evokes a more ideologically charged artistic movement. It was used in connection with a wide swath of the era’s artists, as Frisch point out:

Die Moderne, as it was often called in German, refers to a set of beliefs and principles that in the broadest sense were shared by many creative artists in Europe from about the 1850s on...The adjective “modern” and the substantive “die Moderne” appear frequently in German writings both from within and about the period 1880 to 1920...It is in many cases an actual *movement*, propelled by a group of like-minded thinkers, artists or critics. But modernism can also suggest a broader tent: in the years around 1900, among composers, critics and the general public, it could encompass figures as different as Arnold Schoenberg, Richard Strauss, Max Reger, Hans Pfitzner, Max von Schillings, Alexander Zemlinsky, Ferruccio Busoni, and Gustav Mahler.⁸⁶

It is at this seemingly incompatible intersection between the era’s tenets of modernism and historicism that the aptly named Historicist Modernism emerges. It developed out of a desire to depict a contemporary (i.e. modern) musical language that has a deeply rooted engagement with the styles and structures of music from the past. The critic Paul Bekker, writing in 1919, referred to it as not mere imitation or superficial adoption of

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Frish, Walter. “Reger’s Historicist Modernism.” *The Musical Quarterly* 87/4 (Winter 2004): 732.

past styles – as neoclassicism was sometimes accused of – but occurring when “the spirit of a new age can recognize and readapt stylistic elements of an older art.”⁸⁷

There is one composer Bekker specifically identifies with realizing this possibility most fully. This composer studied with Hugo Reimann, idolized Brahms, and deified Bach. He died prematurely at the age of forty-three, and as Leon Botstein put it, “can be understood as a phenomenon in terms of the need to display virtuosity in craft within a polemical stylized historicism.”⁸⁸ Our focus now turns to his aesthetics and more specifically his solo viola works: Max Reger.

⁸⁷ Frisch, “Reger’s Bach and Historicist Modernism.” *Nineteenth Century Music*, 25/2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-02): 299.

⁸⁸ Botstein, Leon. “History and Max Reger,” *The Musical Quarterly* 87/4 (Winter 2004): 621.

III. Examining the Aesthetics and Solo Viola Works of Max

Reger

Bach is for me the beginning and end of all music; upon him rests, and from him originates, all real progress!

-Max Reger, 1905⁸⁹

[Reger is] the first to make reference in his art to that past which for us, insofar as we want to connect with a past at all, is the most fruitful; he was the first to reach beyond the classic-romantic models to Bach.

-Paul Bekker, 1919⁹⁰

No composer embodied the aesthetics of Historicist Modernism as fully as Max Reger. In idolizing Brahms for his ability to embrace the musical past while reimagining it within a contemporary framework, Reger took it a step further: “reaching back, often obsessively or desperately, to the world of Bach.”⁹¹ His adoration of Bach is evident from the quote attributed to him above; it was far from the only time he made such superlative proclamations about Bach’s music.

No doubt some of Reger’s obsession with Bach stemmed from his own personalized version of the “Bach-as-healthy-living” trope that was in the cultural air of fin de siècle Germany, as highlighted in the previous chapter. As Frisch notes, Reger, “was plagued by self-doubt, was physically and psychically restless, suffered from alcoholism, and composed

⁸⁹ As quoted in Frisch, “Reger’s Bach and Historicist Modernism,” *Nineteenth Century Music*, 25/2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-02): 299.

⁹⁰ From Paul Bekker, “Neue Musik,” in *Neue Musik*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1923: 100-102. As quoted in Frisch, “Reger’s Bach and Historicist Modernism,” *Nineteenth Century Music*, 25/2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-02): 298-299.

⁹¹ Frisch, Walter. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005: 150.

and performed with compulsive prolixity.⁹² Yet at the same time he did not embrace the past with a sense of nostalgia or with a desire to go back to an earlier style or era, as the Life Reformers were advocating. His Bach fixation was an obsessive outgrowth of fin de siècle German culture and its modernist strains, reflecting the nervous and unsettled energy of the times. Christopher Anderson, in his preface to the English translations of Reger's writings, summarizes this perception of Reger's life and work:

Man and music remain conflicted, provocative, and acrimonious, painfully caught between a monumental past and a precarious future, brimming with the bile of his time.⁹³

Frisch summarizes Reger's activities around Bach's music, which illustrate the composer's fixation:

- 34 arrangements of Bach organ works, for either piano two hands or four hands, or for two pianos. These include larger works like preludes or toccatas and fugues, as well as chorale preludes.
- 35 arrangements for organ of Bach keyboard works, including some preludes and fugues from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, *Two-Part Inventions*, and the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*.
- 14 arrangements of Bach's orchestral works for four-hand piano or for chamber ensemble.
- 7 arrangements of solo concertos, often for chamber ensemble, or with piano reduction of orchestral part.
- 2 arrangements of Bach's violin sonatas for violin and piano.
- 2 arrangements of Bach's cantatas, with realized organ part.
- An edition of Bach's keyboard works prepared with August Schmid-Lindner for Schott
- A revision of Josef Rheinberger's two-piano arrangement of the *Goldberg Variations*.⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid, 151.

⁹³ Anderson, Christopher. *Selected Writings of Max Reger*. New York & London: Routledge, 2006: xi.

⁹⁴ Frisch, 151-152. Frisch cites Johannes Lorenzen, *Max Reger als Bearbeiter Bachs*. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1982: 18-25.

All of this adoration for Bach did not develop in a vacuum. Beyond the ever-looming cultural legacy of Bach over a fin de siècle composer, this influence on Reger can be attributed to the composer's artistic growth under the tutelage of the renowned theorist Hugo Riemann, with whom he studied from 1890 to 1895. Frisch notes the distinctive nature of this student-teacher relationship:

That a composer of Reger's ability should have as his principal teacher not another composer, but a musicologist – moreover a musicologist of the status and authority of Riemann – does indeed constitute...a “unique constellation.”⁹⁵

Ultimately the difference between a musicologist's historical relationship with Bach and a composer's contemporary relationship with Bach proved to undermine the association between Riemann and Reger. When Riemann published his 1907 polemical article, “Degeneration und Regeneration in der Musik” (‘Degeneration and Regeneration in Music’), he highlighted the tenets of nineteenth-century historicism and the museum culture by holding up the great masters of the past – Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Gluck, Handel, Bach, Palestrina, etc – and denouncing the contemporary age:

Degeneration and decadence are clear, and a complete detour, the debacle of modernity, stands directly in our path.⁹⁶

Reger reacted to Riemann's article swiftly and decisively. While it had been deteriorating since 1895, this moment was the true bottoming out of their relationship. Reger publicly broke with his former teacher over the Degeneration article, responding to it in the *Neue Musik-Zeitung*. In a letter to his friend Henri Hinrichsen before the article's publication,

⁹⁵ Frisch, Walter. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005: 152.

⁹⁶ Anderson, Christopher. *Selected Writings of Max Reger*. New York & London: Routledge, 2006: 39.

he says that his response to Riemann is going to, “hit like a small bomb” and that he has “violently settled accounts with the regressives.”⁹⁷ Proudly aligning himself with progressives and moderns like Strauss, Reger “endorsed a vision of music in which one could revere the older masters and still ‘ride to the left.’”⁹⁸ He also distinguished between his own historicist ideology and the stifling attitudes perceived in his former teacher and others in academia: “We will not be muzzled and placed under musicological guardianship!”⁹⁹ Certainly at least in his own mind, Reger was composing progressive, modern music, even while emulating and obsessing over Bach.

Beyond arrangements or polemical writings, Reger’s emulation of a modernist style in the image of Bach is quite evident in his original compositions. Scholars tend to focus on Reger’s prolific writing for organ between the mid-1890s and 1905 as the primary example of this.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Bach remains the composer most closely associated with the organ, something Reger was keenly aware of. Heinrich Riemann, a renowned organist of the age, encouraged organists and composers interested in writing for the instrument to immerse themselves in Bach. He wrote in 1894, “Beyond this style there is no salvation [*Heil*]...Bach becomes for that reason the criterion of our art of writing for the organ.”¹⁰¹ Reger has always been celebrated amongst organists for his rich contributions to their repertoire.

⁹⁷ Anderson, Christopher. *Selected Writings of Max Reger*, 41.

⁹⁸ Frisch, *German Modernism*, 153.

⁹⁹ Anderson, *Selected Writings of Max Reger*, 47.

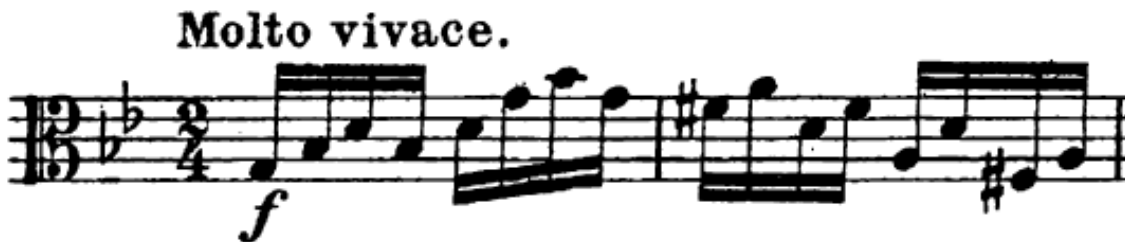
¹⁰⁰ See for instance: Frisch, *German Modernism*, 154-169.

¹⁰¹ As quoted in Frisch, *German Modernism*, 153.

But the presence of Bach in Reger's compositional psyche is undeniable in other genres as well. Reger, "steered clear of the genres in which the major musico-political battles of the later nineteenth century were being fought."¹⁰² In particular he did not write symphonic poems or music dramas (thus avoiding comparisons with Wagner). Between avoiding major genres and emulating Bach to such an extreme degree, there might exist an explanation for why Reger's music, according to Frisch, "has been vastly underappreciated in Anglo-American musicology."¹⁰³ Yet his avoidance of the prevalent genres of the time also led him to revive other genres – notably, for present purposes, the solo string suite.

Three Suites for Solo Viola, op. 131d

Example 1 shows the opening of the last movement of Reger's G Minor Viola Suite:



**Example 1. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, IV,
m. 1-2**

The parallel with the opening of the last movement of Bach's G Minor Violin Sonata – in the same key and featuring constant sixteenth note passagework in comparable tempi – is undeniable:

¹⁰² Ibid, 153.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 139.



Example 2. J.S. Bach, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001, IV, m. 1-6

While most parallels between Reger's solo Suites and Bach's solo string works are not quite as clear-cut as this, such similarities in style and content are not difficult to find in comparing Reger's op. 131 works for solo strings with those of the composer he admittedly worshipped.

The *Three Suites for Solo Viola* were written in the final year of Reger's life. While the original manuscripts have disappeared, they were sent to his publisher Simrock on December 15, 1915. This suggests the Suites were likely written in November 1915.¹⁰⁴ The letter 'd' within the 131 opus number catalogs it with three other collections for solo strings – six *Preludes and Fugues for Solo Violin*, op. 131a, *Three Violin Duos (Canons and Fugues) in the Ancient Manner*, op. 131b, and *Three Suites for Solo Violoncello*, op. 131c. These titles alone demonstrate additional examples of Reger's wholehearted embrace of the

¹⁰⁴ Reger, Max. *Drei Suiten für Viola Solo, opus 131d*. Franz Beyer, ed. (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1991): IV – V.

aesthetic world of historicism-as-modernism. The choice of writing for solo strings – like writing for organ – represented for Reger another genre in which he could pay sincere homage to Bach.

The *Suite No. 1 in G Minor* (op. 131d, no. 1) evokes Bach throughout. While Reger does not use any direct themes of Bach in the Suite – as he does with cantata and chorale themes of Bach in earlier works such as the *Organ Suite*, op. 16, the *Bach Variations*, op. 81, or the *Piano Concerto*, op. 114¹⁰⁵ – there are abundant parallels to note nevertheless. This is evident from the opening statement of the first movement:



Example 3. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, I, m. 1-2

A rolled G-minor arpeggiation establishes the tonic. It is voiced exactly as the first chord in Bach's G Minor Violin Sonata, minus the top G due to idiomatic limitations of the viola. The first movement in each case provides a parallel function – a slow, somber and reflective fantasia to provide balance and contrast to the faster, energetic movement that follows.

¹⁰⁵ See Frisch, *German Modernism*, 154-172.

Beyond the broad similarities in Reger and Bach's first movements, there is no real mistaking one for the other. In spite of the nuanced and highly expressive harmonies Bach employs, his Adagio is fundamentally rooted in a tonic-dominant relationship. V and V⁷ chords are voiced and ornamented in ever-changing ways, prolonging the dominant chord tension through elongated passages for dramatic effect. This is established from the opening gesture of the work – after the tonic is stated, Bach lingers for twice as long in the dominant sound world, which further dramatizes the return to the tonic halfway through m. 2:

Adagio.

i _____ V⁽⁴⁻³⁾ _____ V _____ i

**Example 4. J.S. Bach, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001,
I, m. 1-2**

Reger, of course, was composing nearly two hundred years later than Bach. He had come of age in a German musical culture inculcated in Wagnerian tropes – particularly the concept of the *unendliche Melodie* ('infinite' or 'endless' melody). This technique served to extend and prolong a dominant harmony, continuously delaying resolution – think of the prelude to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* – and seems a logical outgrowth from the dominant prolongation practice seen in Bach.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Taruskin argues that Wagner hardly subverted tonal harmony as some of his disciples later suggested, but that he instead “brought many aspects of traditional tonal practice to their technical and expressive zenith, always by working within the system...Wagner's most important innovations had the effect...of prolonging and intensifying the traditional dominant function.” See Taruskin, *OHWM*, Vol. 3, 543.

But Reger was hardly a Wagnerian, at least overtly in outlook and demeanor. For a modernist work so grounded in traditional tonality, though, it is surprising what a cursory role the dominant harmony seems to play in Reger's first movement of the First Suite. Reger certainly utilizes it when needed, but it is employed in an almost obligatory way, as though the composer felt his hands were tied. In the final cadence of the movement, for instance, the dominant harmony barely registers:



Example 5. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, I, m. 32-34

In the movement's ternary ABA structure, this passage functions as a sort of codetta at the conclusion of the A section's return. The F[#]-E^b chord in m. 33 hints at vii^{o7}, but that is the only leading tone before the final measure, and it falls on a weak offbeat. The only moment that can really be called a dominant harmony is the exceedingly brief C-F[#] chord in the final measure – the raised third and lowered seventh degrees of the V chord. This chord gives us these leading tones – which resolve as expected – but again occurs on a weak offbeat, with no root D for anchoring.

A passage like that seen in Example 6 illustrates what might be termed 'allusions to the dominant,' since the dominant here again is employed more peripherally than directly:



**Example 6. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d,
I, m. 3-4/m. 29-30**

The first three beats in Example 6 establish a sequential pattern, both rhythmically and harmonically. The eighth notes on each beat outline a $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}$ chord, functioning as a predominant. The $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}$ chord shares all but one pitch with a true V^7 (F^\sharp , A and C are found in both; E^b is lowered to D to complete the transformation). The next three beats (fourth beat of m. 3 and first two beats of m. 4) function as the first true dominant-to-tonic motion Reger gives us, complete with a prolongation of the dominant through the downbeat of measure 4.

Of perhaps more harmonic interest is not Reger's steadfast avoidance of clear dominant harmonies, but his consistent use of C^\sharp and V^\sharp/V harmonies throughout the movement. When a C^\sharp appears prominently in m. 1 (see Example 3), it seems that it is being employed simply as an expressive chromatic lower neighbor tone to the dominant D. But it returns in other contexts as the movement progresses, most notably as the leading tone in V^\sharp/V functionality. With the avoidance of dominant chords throughout, Reger tends to linger in this A major harmonic world; note their prominence in the final measures of the movement as seen in Example 5.

If the dominant is largely undercut in the first movement of Reger's Suite, that does not appear to be the case in the Suite's subsequent movements. The two fast movements – the second and fourth – each feature plenty of traditionally utilized dominant-to-tonic

motion. In both movements' cases, the first two measures firmly establish a *i – V* relationship, and both unfold from there in a fairly straightforward manner. The opening phrase of the Vivace second movement concludes with a *forte* V chord in m. 7 (see Example 7), in case there was any doubt as to the home key of the piece:



Example 7. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, II, m. 1-8

The G Minor Suite's third movement, a gentle Andante, evokes the character – if not the content – of one of Bach's Siciliano movements. The characteristic dotted, compound-meter rhythm is absent, but the syncopated opening in 3/4 creates a sense of 6/8. The lilting quality and placement as the third movement (within a slow-fast-moderately slow-fast movement structure) add to the movement's feeling of Baroque influence.¹⁰⁷

It is worth a brief aside to mention some of the other works in Reger's op. 131 series for solo strings, for the Baroque and specifically Bachian inspiration is even more overt than

¹⁰⁷ Reger's other Viola Suites contain similar Baroque idioms. The D Major Suite in particular (op. 131d, no. 2) has a third movement evoking a Minuet and a finale in the rollicking 6/8 meter of a Gigue.

in the Viola Suites. The *Three Suites for Violoncello Solo*, op. 131c, feature movement titles that the Viola Suites noticeably lack. These titles – including a Fugue in the first Suite and Gavotte and Gigue movements in the second Suite – give an even clearer indication of Reger’s Historicist Modernism interests, as do the compositional titles of ops. 131a and b (the *Preludes and Fugues for Solo Violin* and the *Three Violin Duos (Canons and Fugues) in the Ancient Manner*).

Reger’s Uneasy Reception

Writing in 1922, only a few years after Reger’s premature death, Ernest Brennecke described the state of Reger reception succinctly: “All that Reger’s name can now evoke is a raised eyebrow or a shrugged shoulder.”¹⁰⁸ Even written so many decades ago, it is notable that such a reaction to Reger has remained so commonplace. Indeed, Reger’s aesthetics and personality have never fit within the overarching narrative of Modernism’s evolution and development in the early twentieth century. Such narratives tend to privilege novelty and innovation with the vantage of historical perspective, and whatever novelty and innovation Reger brought to the Modernist party requires greater levels of discernment to uncover.

Reger has always been more celebrated in Germany than elsewhere, perhaps in part because his career trajectory fits more naturally into larger narratives of a German nationalist historicism. He believed fervently in the great lineage of German composers nearly to a fault – holding Brahms in such high esteem that he took to the embracing of older, Bach-influenced mannerisms and formal designs far further. This aesthetic position has tempted

¹⁰⁸ Brennecke, Ernest. “The Two Reger-Legends.” *The Musical Quarterly*, 8/3 (July 1922): 385.

many to dismiss Reger as a conservative, a reactionary. But Reger's assessment of Brahms was designed to hold him up as the representation of "true progress," and meant, by extension, "reclaiming progress for [Reger]."¹⁰⁹ This helps to better understand his feud with his former mentor Riemann, and Reger passionately aligning himself with the so-called progressives of fin de siècle German music.

While Reger's reception outside of Germany remains by and large marginalized in significance, there is ample evidence that fresh examinations of his oeuvre and reassessments of his music's relevance are taking place. In addition to the recent work of English-speaking scholars like Walter Frisch and Christopher Anderson, there are international performers who are re-discovering and championing Reger's music. In some ways, this brings the struggle of performing and programming Reger's music full circle.

'The Last Giant'

Several famous performers early on took to propagating Reger's works on their audiences – Adolf Busch, Frieda Kwast-Hodapp, Aloys Knotarsky and Rudolf Serkin, to name but a few. As these early champions of Reger had their careers end, their favored pieces of his tended to disappear from the concert repertoire.¹¹⁰ More recently, violinist Gidon Kremer, pianist Peter Serkin and violist Yuri Bashmet – who arranged and recorded the G Minor Viola Suite for viola and chamber orchestra – have taken up the cause of

¹⁰⁹ Reinhold Brinkmann and Antonius Bittmann, "A 'Last Giant in Music': Thoughts on Max Reger in the Twentieth Century," *The Musical Quarterly* 87/4 (Winter 2004): 640.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 642.

performing Reger's works. Organists, as alluded to earlier, have always celebrated Reger's prolific contributions to their repertoire.

One of the Germans who recognized and celebrated the music of Reger was a concertizing violist and budding composer of the next generation, Paul Hindemith. Hindemith acknowledged that he felt indebted to and influenced by Reger, particularly as they shared interests in polyphony and Baroque revivalism. Hindemith spoke highly of his predecessor, commenting at one point that, "Max Reger was the last giant in music. My own work is inconceivable without him."¹¹¹ Later in his life, in the 1950s and 1960s, Hindemith often conducted works by Reger on programs with his own compositions.¹¹² He also produced an edition of Reger's 100th *Psalm* for chorus and orchestra in 1958.¹¹³ Beyond the lineage connecting one German composer to the next, Hindemith is of interest here for his distinct aesthetic development, for his active performing life, and for his unparalleled prolific writing for solo viola.

¹¹¹ As quoted in Brinkmann and Bittmann, "A 'Last Giant in Music': Thoughts on Max Reger in the Twentieth Century": 635.

¹¹² Ibid, 642.

¹¹³ Kemp, Ian. *Hindemith*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970: 8.

IV. The Early Career of Paul Hindemith: His Compositional

Development and Performing Life until 1929

The idea of the composer living in isolation, patiently or impatiently awaiting inspiration, was a product of the Romantic era. Hindemith, rebelling against that idea, deliberately went back, for his interpretation of a musician's function, to the eighteenth century and earlier, when the task of a composer was to create and play music for present use.

-Geoffrey Skelton, *Paul Hindemith: The Man Behind the Music*¹¹⁴

Hindemith as Emerging Composer

With Reger's death in 1916 and the end of the war in 1918, Hindemith emerged in the years following as a prominent new composer for Germans to champion. The timing here was rather convenient, and not coincidental: 1919 marked the birth of the Weimar Republic, and the year in which Hindemith's foray into composition (and away from strictly performance, which did remain central in his career thereafter) became more serious. The publishing house Schott published his compositions for the first time that year.¹¹⁵ A meteoric rise to fame (and infamy) would follow soon thereafter.

Hindemith proved in many ways to be a logical successor to the Historicist Modernism mantle left vacant by Reger's death. This can be seen both in terms of his influences and aesthetic outlook, especially once he found his mature *neue Sachlichkeit* style.

¹¹⁴ Skelton, Geoffrey. *Paul Hindemith: The Man Behind the Music*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1975: 17.

¹¹⁵ Schott was Hindemith's lifelong publisher from 1919 on, though Breitkopf and Härtel published one piece of his in 1917, the Three Pieces for Cello and Piano, op. 8. See Hinton, Stephen. *The Idea of Gebrauchsmusik: A Study of Musical Aesthetics in the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) with Particular Reference to the Works of Paul Hindemith*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1989: 107.

But the younger composer had by that point quickly transcended any such narrow labels in his early works, forging a distinct and inventive manner of incorporating eclectic and diverse influences into his scores.

The work Schott published in 1919 was his *String Quartet*, op. 10 – written, “in the field without piano, without the help of any sonorous means” while Hindemith was still serving as a soldier in early 1918.¹¹⁶ Leaning on classical models, and with an assuredness of form and style, Ian Kemp notes the influence of Reger – particularly in the chromatic fugato section of the first movement.¹¹⁷ Similar chromaticism is prevalent in the second movement’s opening theme:



¹¹⁶ Hinton, *The Idea of Gebrauchsmusik*, 117. In older publications, this piece is often referred to as *String Quartet No. 1 in F Minor*, op. 10. With the discovery of the score to Hindemith’s previously unpublished *String Quartet*, op. 2, the numbering of Hindemith’s String Quartets has obviously changed.

¹¹⁷ Kemp, *Hindemith*, 8.



**Example 8. Hindemith, String Quartet in F Minor, op. 10,
II, m. 1-12**

Every part of melody, harmony and texture here is written in a linear, semi-tonal chromatic language – arguably a descendant of the *Tristan* style of chromatic harmonization.¹¹⁸ String players are certainly familiar with this sort of linear chromaticism in Hindemith's works of this period. The five string sonatas with and without piano that make up Hindemith's op. 11 abound in similarly chromatic writing:

¹¹⁸ Kemp, *Hindemith*, 9.



Example 9. Hindemith, Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 11 no. 4, III, from Variation VI: *Fugato, mit bizarrer Plumpheit vorsutragen*

Example 9 is taken from the final movement of the op. 11 no. 4 *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, the most substantial work of the op. 11 series. This highly inventive work features an unusual formal structure – a fantasia-like introduction leads to a theme and variations, which build into the finale, a second set of variations on the same theme. Throughout the work, Hindemith evokes a host of early twentieth-century influences – most notably Debussy. The momentum of the finale is interrupted for what is literally a ‘bizarre’ fugue, juxtaposing sinuous chromatic lines with a Debussy-like whole tone language.



**Example 10. Hindemith, Sonata for Solo Viola, op. 11 no. 5,
IV, *In Form und Zeitmass einer Passacaglia*, m. 53-64**

The chromatically-laced passage highlighted in Example 10 from the op. 11 no. 5 *Solo Viola Sonata* is also taken from its final movement, in the form of a passacaglia. One can see the impact of Bach and Historicist Modernism on Hindemith here. The work is “a unique synthesis of Debussy and Reger (or Reger-Bach).¹¹⁹” In this final movement, Hindemith adapts a Baroque formal structure (a la the passacaglia movement that concludes Brahms’ *Symphony No. 4*). David Neumeyer, in analyzing the *Sonata*, sees Historicist Modernism at work in the passacaglia finale, even if he does not call it by that name as such:

The movement is...a powerful historical reflection – Hindemith in the musical language of 1919 contemplating in form and tempo the great D-minor Chaconne of J.S. Bach...Instead of ‘emptying out’ the traditional forms, turning them into neutral types which could be exploited for the composition of new music, here Hindemith still thought in terms of the nineteenth-century dialectic of demand for originality and reverence for the masters...a music designed both to be new and also to offer a new way of hearing, of interpreting, its traditional model...We must also distinguish between

¹¹⁹ Neumeyer, David. *The Music of Paul Hindemith*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986: 18.

Hindemith's historical reflection in this passacaglia and deliberate archaism...The simplistic arguments of Adorno notwithstanding, historical reflection is not automatically unhealthy archaism.¹²⁰

Neumeyer makes a case for the aesthetic values of Historicist Modernism almost as passionately as Walter Frisch does in his reassessments of Reger.¹²¹ Beyond Hindemith's use of the passacaglia form, however, the idiomatic writing for a solo string instrument recalls the transcendent effect achieved from the detached bariolage technique in the opening movement of Bach's *Violin Partita No. 3 in E Major*:



Example 11. Bach, Violin Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006, I

In bariolage technique, the distinct timbres of different strings are highlighted via rapid bow movement between the strings. No two consecutive notes within a bariolage passage are played on the same string, with higher pitched notes often being played in a higher position on a lower string. This is all on display in Example 11, which shows the open E string distinguished by being written stem up, so as to differentiate it as a pedal tone from

¹²⁰ Neumeyer, 117.

¹²¹ See previous chapter.

the other moving pitches (including many pitches above E, which are played on the A string). Hindemith's similar passage in Example 10 presents the pedal open A string with its stem up as the stem-down pitches move chromatically through the passage around it.

While Reger has certainly been acknowledged as an identifiable influence on Hindemith's pre-1920 works, Debussy-ian whole tone scales and collections also abound, sometimes uneasily alongside late-Romantic, Strauss-like gestures.¹²² Karl Holl, writing for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1919, described Hindemith's style to that point:

Italian opera melody, Slav rhythms and impressionistic sounds have not been completely assimilated and made his own. But the composer's remarkable melodic invention, his surprisingly assured mastery of form and the powerful impetus of his works entitle us to speak of a creative talent far beyond the average.¹²³

The general perception among most scholars and critics today of Hindemith's early output is well summarized by Stephen Hinton:

Taken as a whole, his early output reveals at best unbounded energy, skill and adaptability in diverse idioms, whether chamber, orchestral, vocal or instrumental. At worst, it represents a lack of direction, a deep-seated insecurity in respect of his vocation as a composer. Most works were composed at speed and are impressive in their apparent sureness of touch. As a stage in a process of maturing and development each work stands as the product of Hindemith's assimilating heterogeneous sources, and seems to contradict the possibility of being regarded as a link in the chain of a logical development. Rather than ask compositional questions which find answers and solutions in a later work, or represent technical problems the posing and resolution of which imply the foundation of an identifiable musical language, each work seems to mark a fresh approach. And each new approach contains a colorfully mixed palette of styles which themselves coexist without glaring contradiction.¹²⁴

¹²² Some of this whole-tone language is seen in the Example 9 from op. 11 no. 4.

¹²³ As quoted in Skelton, 57.

¹²⁴ Hinton, *Gebrauchsmusik*, 118.

Certainly there are worse things to be accused of. A natural ability to assimilate diverse influences, a prodigious talent, and prolific creativity are not such a bad place for any composer to grow and mature from.

But there is an additional angle from which to consider these early Hindemith works. His emergence as a significant voice in German composition leads many to forget – or discount – his rich and extensive life as a performing violinist and later, a performing violist. His performing life was occurring long before and alongside his meteoric rise to prominence as a composer. How the experience as a prominent string soloist and chamber musician impacted his compositional approach, and how his composing influenced his playing, is something that cannot truly be evaluated. But at the very least, no discussion of Hindemith the composer is truly complete without some words on Hindemith the performer.

Hindemith as Virtuoso, the Amar Quartet

For the premiere of the op. 16 *Quartet* at the new Donaueschingen Festival in 1921, Hindemith established a new ensemble, the Amar Quartet, specifically for the occasion. This “proper quartet,” as he termed it in a letter to Emmy Ronnefeldt, was formed “to play only modern music.”¹²⁵ They also were created out of necessity: Gustav Havemann, whose Havemann Quartet had been engaged to perform the piece, refused to do so, leaving Hindemith obliged to form a new group.¹²⁶ The Amar Quartet was comprised of violinists

¹²⁵ Hindemith, Paul. *Selected Letters of Paul Hindemith*. Geoffrey Skelton, ed. and trans. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995: 29.

¹²⁶ The full story extends even beyond that: Hindemith’s op. 16 *Quartet* had been unsuccessfully submitted to the American benefactress of contemporary music, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. When she rejected it, Hindemith’s publisher Schott sent the work to the Donaueschingen without consulting the composer. He first

Licco Amar and Walter Caspar, Hindemith on viola, and Rudolf Hindemith (the composer's brother) on cello.¹²⁷ That Hindemith was onstage for the performance of his own piece serves as a reminder that his compositional works cannot and should not be fully separated from his highly successful experiences as a performer.

Hindemith's declaration of the Amar Quartet as a "proper quartet" and his optimism and excitement at the possibilities of this group in 1922 are understandable, given his performance experience until that point. While he rarely spoke of his childhood during his lifetime, evidence points to Hindemith's early years being largely unhappy, dominated by poverty and his father's strict admonishment to practice. He was known to have performed on violin with his sister Toni, his brother Rudolph on cello, and his father accompanying on the zither as the *Frankfurter Kindertrio*.¹²⁸ One of Hindemith's plays, written later, claims to be based on true events and "reveals a rough and rather turbulent domestic life dominated by music and the constant exhortation to practice."¹²⁹

At the Hoch Conservatorium in Frankfurt, Hindemith began studying violin with Adolf Rebner in 1908. A letter of Hindemith's from December 1913 indicates the sometime volatile relationship between teacher and student:

Not so very long ago Herr Rebner made a terrible scene and bawled me out good and proper, because, during an evening recital, I had not played exactly

learned of the entire ordeal upon finding out the Havemann Quartet refused to play the piece. See Rickards, Guy. *Hindemith, Hartmann and Henze*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1995: 47.

¹²⁷ Throughout the Amar Quartet's career, the cellist role alternated between Rudolf Hindemith and Maurits Frank. Frank had previously been Rudolf's cello teacher as well as the cellist alongside Paul in the Rebner Quartet. Rudolf was the initial cellist in 1921, but found working with his brother irksome. He returned to the group sometime in 1924 through 1927, when recordings that survive of the group were made. Frank was with the Quartet c1922-c1924, and again from 1927-1929, until the group disbanded.

¹²⁸ Skelton, 28-29.

¹²⁹ Skelton, 30.

as he had wished, though it hadn't seemed bad to me. But that gives me no reason to doubt his friendship. You will see from this what he expects of me, and I am happy that he makes such big demands. In this respect I value him more than any of the other teachers. Also in his manner of playing I prefer him to most of the well-know virtuosos.¹³⁰

Upon graduating, Hindemith took up as second violin in his former teacher's string quartet, the Rebner Quartet. Soon thereafter he began working as a violinist in the Frankfurt Opera orchestra. Even if one factors in that Hindemith was surely wont to exaggerate his proclivities as an up-and-coming talent on the violin, his own letters suggest he was quite the star virtuoso in these years. Consider some excerpts from this letter to his friends the Weber family in 1916:

One of the concerts in Pforzheim was a big solo concert, in which I loosed off the Mendelssohn concerto and the Ciacona. Brilliant reviews laced with fine epitheta such as "majestic display," "captivating," "deep insight," "sparklingly light," "brilliant achievement," "height of rare ability," "powerful impression," "infectious verve," and so on...

In March I passed my audition [as concertmaster for the Frankfurt Opera orchestra]...without being given any idea what I was wanted for. There, completely unprepared, I played for the director and the two conductors the 1st movement of both the Brahms and the Beethoven concertos, the complete Mendelssohn concerto, and the Chaconne, which of course gave the gentlemen a great surprise... On the following Thursday I passed yet another audition...when some extremely difficult passages from Salome (which I had never before seen) were put in front of me and I played them straight off by sight.¹³¹

After serving in the war from 1917 – 1919 (where he continued to play in quartets and other ensembles), Hindemith returned to the Rebner Quartet, now requesting to be the ensemble's

¹³⁰ Hindemith, *Selected Letters*, 4-5.

¹³¹ Hindemith, *Selected Letters*, 10-11.

violist.¹³² Rebner marveled in his memoirs at Hindemith's temperament and discipline on concert tours with the Quartet, noting:

how prolific Hindemith was and what good use he made of his time. He could concentrate on his composing just as well in a railway carriage as in waiting rooms or the restaurant car. The rest of us gradually got used to his 'preoccupations.'¹³³

As composing became a bigger priority for Hindemith, his tolerance for Rebner's unadventurous repertoire choices and reverence towards the established masters was wearing thin. He left the group in 1921. The shift in where Hindemith's professional priorities lay is evident in a letter from September 1922 to Emmy Ronnefeldt:

Last year I finally left the Rebner Quartet...I shall get out of the orchestra [Frankfurt Opera orchestra] and spend my full time composing and playing in the [Amar] quartet.¹³⁴

The Amar Quartet did soon become a cornerstone of Hindemith's work, and his prolific composing occurred alongside a rigorous performance schedule with the group. The group's performances took on a level of infamy in these years.¹³⁵ In 1924 alone, the Quartet had 129 appearances.¹³⁶ It is frequently remarked upon – as Rebner did above – that Hindemith showed exceptional energy and ability in write a seemingly endless supply of new works, all while maintaining such a hectic performing schedule first with the Rebner, and then with the Amar, Quartets. In writing to his publishers in 1924, Hindemith confidently

¹³² Sadly, no biographies indicate what prompted Hindemith to request this switch from violin to viola.

¹³³ Skelton, 60-61.

¹³⁴ Hindemith, *Selected Letters*, 29.

¹³⁵ On August 8, 1922, their performance of Webern's *Five Movements for String Quartet* in Salzburg had to be stopped when police were called in to break up a riot in the hall. In 1923, they performed a subversive rendition of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* Overture as if they were incompetent musicians. See Rickards, 47-48.

¹³⁶ Skelton, 74.

assured them, “Do not be alarmed by my rabbit-like productivity. So far I have noticed no falling off in quality – rather the contrary...I can now write a lot because I know exactly what to do.¹³⁷” His critics were skeptical – they claimed the speed at which he composed compromised the quality of his output.¹³⁸

Perhaps most telling of all concerning the centrality of the act of performing – of making actual music – to Hindemith’s sensibility as a musician is evidenced by the circumstances surrounding the Amar Quartet’s eventual disbandment. In early 1929, Hindemith’s tireless energy finally caught up with him. The Quartet’s tour of Russia delayed work on a new opera and a ballet score intended for Diaghilev. The pressures from the legendary impresario to have a piano score by March caused Hindemith to determine he had to break up the Amar Quartet. That Diaghilev died later that year and the ballet was never written makes the decision – which could not have been an easy one for Hindemith to make – all the more heartrending.¹³⁹

In what does not seem like pure coincidence, Hindemith wrote to his publishers in February 1930 that he was going through a rare dry period of composing. With the Amar Quartet having disbanded, Hindemith’s need to have a chamber group to play with soon led him to form a new string trio with violinist Josef Wolfsthal and cellist Emanuel Feuermann.

¹³⁷ Skelton, 75.

¹³⁸ A possibly apocryphal but highly entertaining example is Richard Strauss supposedly asking Hindemith how long he had taken to compose a work he had just heard. “Four days,” Hindemith replied. Strauss responded, “That’s what I thought.” See Skelton, 75.

¹³⁹ Skelton, 93-94.

Within a few months, his creative dry spell was over and new compositions resumed.¹⁴⁰ That he was rehearsing and performing chamber music regularly again – ‘actually’ making music – signifies the central role his performance work figured into Hindemith’s overall musical outlook.

Hindemith as Expressionist?

In the years between 1913-1915, Hindemith dabbled in writing short plays. While essentially lacking in literary merit, these ‘*Dramatische Meisterwerke*’ (‘Dramatic Masterpieces’) – as they were described in jest on their title pages – offer a glimpse into Hindemith’s experimentations with dramatic expressionism. As Guy Rickhards points out, “A common thread of these plays is the constriction of an individual’s freedom by stultifying demands to practice a musical instrument.”¹⁴¹ Based on what we know of Hindemith’s unhappy childhood, it would not be a stretch to suggest these writings were autobiographically influenced.

One of the plays, entitled *Das Bratschenfimmel* (‘The Viola Craze’), concerns a bank clerk who resolves to kill his boss “by playing the viola in his presence until he can stand it no more.”¹⁴² The bank clerk collects violas – legitimately or illegitimately – and while others die, the boss remains alive. Ultimately, in despair, the clerk commits suicide. While it is tempting to find a viola joke in there somewhere – particularly in light of Hindemith’s mastery of the instrument – it is perhaps more relevant for entering into the topic of how

¹⁴⁰ Skelton, 98.

¹⁴¹ Rickards, 26.

¹⁴² Skelton, 30-31.

expressionism influenced Hindemith, or inversely, whether he could be considered an expressionist.

At Donaueschingen, where the two sources of the Danube River unite in southwestern Germany, a new chamber music festival was launched in 1921. The Donaueschingen Festival would prove to play a significant role in the history and development of contemporary music, and its first two summers saw Hindemith firmly establish himself as a leader of the new avant-garde, with successful premieres of his *String Quartet*, op. 16 and *Kammermusik No. 1*. The exhilarating times Hindemith was experiencing in these years is palpable in a letter from September 1922 to Emmy Ronnefeldt:

At both of the above festivals [Donaueschingen and Salzburg festivals] I once again succeeded in scoring over all the other composers, and since then my affairs have been blooming beyond all expectations. All over the place my things are being performed...Publishers are falling over one another to get me, and I am making use of the favourable constellation to pick out the one who will pay me the most.¹⁴³

Each of the works premiered at Donaueschingen are worth mentioning for the distinct styles they evoke, both from each other and from previous Hindemith compositions.

The op. 16 *Quartet* has been called, “Hindemith’s excursion into expressionism.”¹⁴⁴ This is due to the perceived influence of Schoenberg (and especially his *Chamber Symphony*) on Hindemith’s score, but also reflects the oftentimes knee-jerk labeling of anything Schoenbergian as automatically expressionist, and vice versa. The broader and more

¹⁴³ Hindemith, Paul. *Selected Letters of Paul Hindemith*. Geoffrey Skelton, ed. and trans. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995: 29.

¹⁴⁴ Kemp, *Hindemith*, 9.

interesting implication of whether Hindemith can be called an expressionist was thoroughly dissected by Stephen Hinton, and deserves a bit of unpacking.¹⁴⁵

While expressionism will not be examined here in the detail that neoclassicism was in Chapter 1, some similar caveats apply. As with neoclassicism, the term ‘expressionism’ gained rapid traction with writers, critics, musicologists and aesthetes in the early 1920s.¹⁴⁶ Much of this newfound awareness of the term and its associated practices focused on the Second Viennese School, just as the neoclassical moniker concurrently came to envelop Stravinsky. While the composers who were labeled with these terms alternatively embraced and dismissed them, scholars ever since continue to struggle with their simultaneously commonplace application and elusive meanings. In analyzing the term expressionism, Hinton reminds us that:

As ever with such terms, the problem stems both from a single word’s being made to embrace a very broad subject and from different usages of the word stressing different things.¹⁴⁷

While the term flowered for about a decade in literature and painting before it became associated with a musical movement, in purely musical terms, expressionism ultimately points only to “a brief moment, an intense crisis.”¹⁴⁸ Its philosophical underpinnings were decidedly ideological, even spiritual.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ See Hinton, 122-157.

¹⁴⁶ Hinton, 122.

¹⁴⁷ Hinton, 50.

¹⁴⁸ Hinton, 61.

¹⁴⁹ Hinton, 56.

Hindemith's compositional output to this point, as we have seen, might be best described as a sort of eclectic consolidation of disparate styles and fashions. In many ways, the works of his that are discussed in more expressionist terms – namely the op. 16 *Quartet* and the one-act operas (*Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen/Das Nusch-Nuschi/Sanct Susanna*) – are a continuation of this tendency to adapt his sound to different fashions and styles. Hindemith was savvy in sensing public taste, and seemed to tailor these works toward the popular artistic trends, rather than espousing an aesthetic philosophy of expressionism that he personally identified with. In discussing the triptych of one-act operas – each based on an expressionist text and all generating considerable journalistic attention at the time, Hinton concludes that they are:

A typical product of early Weimar expressionism, an expressionism defined as much by performance practice and public taste as it is by a corpus of arts works or group of artists, as much by reception as by production...It would seem that the early Hindemith did not subscribe to any clearly defined philosophy of art that can be called expressionist. He does not appear to have been guided by the inner necessity central to expressionist philosophy.¹⁵⁰

As an up-and-coming composer in these years, Hindemith faced an interesting dilemma. Like all German-speaking composers, he was a product of the historicist museum culture – the Romantic tradition and lineage. He was also in the midst of a culture of flourishing literary expressionism, which he utilized as text and subject matter for his operas. But he did not subscribe to the tenets of expressionism. Hindemith had thus far adapted a gamut of eclectic styles, but none had truly stuck as his mature musical voice.

¹⁵⁰ Hinton, 145.

Hindemith as Dadaist?

The prominent German critic Paul Bekker – who was heard from earlier in discussing Reger and Bach¹⁵¹ – wrote in 1922 about the “turn of the times,” in contemporary composition, and specifically mentions the “madcap, jaunty Paul Hindemith.”¹⁵² Such a description had to be derived from having heard *Kammermusik No. 1*, op. 24 no. 1, premiered at Donaueschingen in the summer of 1922. The work is now remembered more “for documentary than musical reasons” which is in truth “commensurate with the composer’s own intentions: it is as important for what it is not, for what it lacks and neglects, as for what it is.”¹⁵³

The work’s madcap elements occur at multiple levels, beginning with the score itself. It is prefaced with the sentence: “It is recommended that the performers be placed out of view of the audience.” While some interpret this as a send up of Wagnerian practices, in which the orchestra was made invisible beneath the opera stage,¹⁵⁴ at the very least this choice was made to defy concert hall conventions. It essentially amounted to what was an early attempt, as Hinton notes, “to transform a concert into a happening.”¹⁵⁵ The twelve-piece chamber ensemble that does play *Kammermusik No. 1* out of sight is hardly a traditional band: between the accordion, trumpet and percussion, it is much more in keeping with the

¹⁵¹ See the quote at the beginning of Chapter III concerning Reger.

¹⁵² Quoted in Hinton, 165.

¹⁵³ Hinton, 166.

¹⁵⁴ Worth bearing in mind too is that by this point Hindemith had been concertmaster of the Frankfurt Opera orchestra for several years.

¹⁵⁵ Hinton, 170.

sort of dance band that might perform a foxtrot – the very form quoted in *Kammermusik*'s finale, before the final siren abruptly halts things.

The opening movement establishes a decidedly non-developmental template. While it can be divided into three sections, the overall effect is one of continuous, mostly static, ostinato figurations. They start, periodically seem randomly to shift gears, and stop. The movement is a minute-and-a-half, and its opening texture has been likened to Stravinsky's *Petrushka*.¹⁵⁶

Another apt comparison though might be to the same composer's *Three Pieces for String Quartet* from 1915. While the comparisons between *Kammermusik No. 1* and *Petrushka* make sense from the perspective of timbre and texture, in style *Kammermusik*'s non-developing miniature first movement shares more in common with the first of Stravinsky's *Quartet Pieces* – another work that gives the effect of a music box that has been wound up and allowed to loop its ostinatos until running out of steam.

Kammermusik No. 1 was the height of Hindemith as the risk-taking, artistic bad boy. Having tried on other aesthetic hats, he was now “trespassing on the preserves of Dada.”¹⁵⁷ Philosophically, this implied a rejection of all previous art in its entirety as a manifestation of decadent bourgeois society – a radical break from tradition. But as seen with expressionism, Hindemith also was not a true Dadaist. He was not a revolutionary.

If Hindemith had felt too compared to Schoenberg and the *Chamber Symphony* with the reception of his op. 16 *Quartet*, *Kammermusik No. 1* was the extreme antithesis of that

¹⁵⁶ Kemp, 11.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

work's developing variation ethos. Instead, Hindemith was opting for non-contrapuntal ostinatos, motoring along without any development. As Ian Kemp says, "musically it placed him in a no-man's-land halfway between a Stravinskian aesthetic and empirical experiment."¹⁵⁸ In this sense, *Kammermusik No. 1* represents yet another aesthetic style that Hindemith is sampling from the buffet, still unsure of what he himself wants to cook.

Ultimately, most saw *Kammermusik No. 1* for what it was: a noisy, sometimes silly, sendoff to any lingering tenets of Romanticism. Its infamy at the time was derived more from its daring to bring quotations of the foxtrot into the concert hall, rather than any of its other deliberately button-pushing features.¹⁵⁹ The work's most lasting importance proved to be the liberating function it seemed to have on Hindemith going forward. He demonstrated the capability to mock openly and deride nineteenth-century concert hall conventions, while also defying aesthetic norms and expectations. Romanticism had been duly expunged in favor of modernism – but what was that actually going to look like for Hindemith?

Neue Sachlichkeit

The term that came to label the movement most affiliated with Hindemith in the 1920s had its roots in the visual arts. The director of the Mannheim Art Gallery, Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, invited guests to a planned exhibition entitled *Neue Sachlichkeit* in May 1923. His invitation indicates how Hartlaub viewed the term:

I am interested in bringing together representative works by those artists who over the last ten years have been neither Impressionistically vague nor Expressionistically abstract, neither sensuously superficial nor

¹⁵⁸ Kemp, 11.

¹⁵⁹ Hinton, 171.

constructivistically introverted. I want to show those artists who have remained...avowedly faithful to positive, tangible reality.¹⁶⁰

Neue Sachlichkeit is often translated into English as “the New Objectivity” or “the New Actuality,” but as with so many nuanced terms, these attempts lose key elements of the original meaning in translation. ‘Sachlichkeit,’ is a difficult word to translate, as it can imply not only a detachment or impartiality, but also a utility or practicality. These are crucial qualities when considering the aesthetic movement, for the utility and practicality aspects are what distinguished Hindemith’s *neue Sachlichkeit* philosophy from the strictly detached neoclassicism of Stravinsky.

There was a sense that Expressionism – which had been the dominant force in German cultural aesthetics over the previous decade – was obsessed with the wonders beyond the world. It was focused on the un-seeable, on the barely knowable elements of the human psyche and the afterlife. The movement towards *neue Sachlichkeit* represented a stance recognizing the wonders of the existing and present day world. It was a choice of objectivity over subjectivity – bringing art to everyday life. The *Sachlichkeit* was both an artistic and a social stance. Of course, as Taruskin is quick to remind, it was also a product of its unique socio-historical context: a product of the shaky new liberal democracy of the young Weimar Republic, born of tremendous German losses from losing the War:

How much more a cataclysm did it [World War I] seem to the losers, for whom it brought immediate political upheaval and economic chaos, the palpable legacy of “decadence.” *Gebrauchsmusik* and *neue Sachlichkeit* were not just a reaction to romanticism, but a reaction to all the forces that were seen to have precipitated the war...Having experienced ruin, Germans

¹⁶⁰ As quoted in Hinton, 63.

artists...were more suspicious than anyone else of the lie of transcendence, any promise of immortality, permanence, lasting value.¹⁶¹

Works such as the *Kleine Kammermusik* for winds, op. 24, the op. 22 *String Quartet*, and the song cycle *Das Marienleben*, op. 27 are often referenced as scores that mark Hindemith's turn towards a mature style and his own version of the *neue Sachlichkeit* sensibility.¹⁶² Certainly there is evidence in many of the scores from this period after *Kammermusik No. 1* that Hindemith is consolidating and streamlining various influences into his own distinct sound.

His distaste for indulgent expressivity and fondness for clarity of texture and form was already evident in his scores to this point, but it now became a more consistently prevailing feature. This aesthetic preference explained Hindemith's predilection towards utilizing the figurations and formal devices of Baroque music, which is in keeping with the trend we have observed over several previous generations of German formalist composers. Like Reger and Brahms before him, Hindemith sought to counter the Wagnerian and Strauss-laden Romanticism – whose vestiges were still frequently heard in the concert halls of Weimar Germany – with a modernism utilizing the structures and styles of the Baroque.

All of this is beginning to sound a lot like neoclassicism. And while that term is frequently mentioned alongside Hindemith's 1920s scores, it is not entirely applicable.¹⁶³ Hinton elucidates that the features that characterize neoclassicism in the 1920s – the semi-

¹⁶¹ Taruskin, *OHWM*, Vol. 4, 527-528.

¹⁶² Kemp, 12-14.

¹⁶³ Among many who reference Hindemith as a neoclassicist are Walter Frisch (who lumps him in with Stravinsky in the article *Reger's Bach and Historicist Modernism*) and Ian Kemp (who refers to *Das Marienleben* as heralding "the neo-classical period of [Hindemith's] maturity." (Kemp, 13)).

objective approach to musical form and compositional construction, the clarity of texture and line, the avoidance of *espressivo* playing, and the use of Baroque idioms – are “not synonymous with *neue Sachlichkeit*.” Neoclassicism is not the end goal, but a contributing factor in *neue Sachlichkeit* aesthetics in music; “it is an important, symptomatic part of it.”¹⁶⁴

He goes on to elaborate what else beyond neoclassical aesthetics is involved in Hindemith’s style embracing the *neue Sachlichkeit*:

i) a general tendency towards a kind of musical constructivism...ii) the use, in the spirit of neo-classicism, of musical quotation, particularly of dance music or jazz from contemporary ‘reality’... iii) the general use of contemporary cultural references, shunning metaphysical contemplation – what might be called ‘actuality’; iv) the turning away from music solely as the vehicle of expression of either the composer or the performer, whereby composing music as a vehicle of performance becomes its *raison d’être*: to be played and seen to be played by professionals or v) music to be played by amateurs.¹⁶⁵

Alongside the aesthetics of neoclassicism, Hinton’s first three points embody the philosophy of art characterizing *neue Sachlichkeit*, which became central to Weimar sensibilities by the mid-1920s. The final two points speak to the concern for writing *Gebrauchsmusik* as a product of *Sachlichkeit* values.¹⁶⁶ A utilitarian attitude was to permeate all acts of composing and performing – it was about the act of doing, of playing or singing, of using.

Geoffrey Skelton, in his biography on Hindemith, mentions a key insight and a key misstep to consider in assessments of Hindemith’s music:

¹⁶⁴ Hinton, 160.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Like the other widely used terms examined here, *Gebrauchsmusik* and its somewhat oxymoronic meaning of ‘music for use,’ is problematic for its often misleading application, yet hugely significant to the artistic and intellectual debates of the 1920s. Hindemith did supposedly coin the term, and before long, it was affiliated with him in the way expressionism had been foisted on Schoenberg and neoclassicism on Stravinsky. As a result, Hindemith soon grew to loath the term. See Hinton, 1-5, 82-106, and Rickards, 60.

His own music is never too difficult to sing or play. It may often demand a high measure of technical ability, but it is never made (or made to sound) deliberately difficult just in order to excite the admiration of the listener for the performer...

The trouble arose when the word *Gebrauchsmusik*, adopted by others, was extended to describe the style rather than the function of these pieces. It was then, because of the similarities of style, superficially applied to virtually the whole of his music, arousing the impression...that Hindemith's aim in life was to provide a sort of practical "workaday" music, good enough for a background, but not to be listened to with any degree of concentration.¹⁶⁷

In lieu of descending into the potential rabbit-hole of reappraising Hindemith's legacy, perhaps the key point here is to appreciate Hindemith's central significance in the developing *neue Sachlichkeit* style in music during the 1920s (and 1930s). After sampling different musical styles and developing a compositional voice, as we have seen, Hindemith's mature style coincided with an emerging artistic movement that naturally complimented his musical sensibilities. While already regarded as an important musical figure, he was now being hailed as the leader of the new generation of German composers. The conservative critic Adolf Weissmann, writing in 1924, said:

[Hindemith has] the drive to forge the link between art for the people and high art. Without sacrificing any of the achievements of new music, he nevertheless keeps his feet firmly on the ground.¹⁶⁸

Writing over a decade later in 1935, the oft-polemical Communist composer Hans Eisler was likewise quick to praise Hindemith as a pioneer and a leading figure of writing *Gebrauchsmusik*:

Hindemith distanced himself from the view that one makes music just to make music, rather he composed music for particular practical purposes. As an artist

¹⁶⁷ Skelton, Geoffrey. *Paul Hindemith: The Man Behind the Music*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1975: 15-17.

¹⁶⁸ As quoted in Hinton, 161-162.

he acted not so much in a God-given way and above the heads of the people than as a craftsman, and that is much more useful to us than a ‘mad genius’ with an arty hairdo.¹⁶⁹

That men of such diverse interests and outlooks would agree on Hindemith’s significance during the 1920s and 1930s indicates the lofty standing the composer had reached, as the leading German composer of the era and the leading exponent of musical *neue Sachlichkeit*. His boundless energy as both performer and composer seemed to embody the aesthetic principles that 1920s Weimar culture embraced, and vice versa.

¹⁶⁹ As quoted in Hinton, 105.

V. Hindemith's Sonata for Solo Viola, op. 25 no. 1 and Ladislav

Vyčpálek's Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21

Hindemith, op. 25 no. 1

Of Hindemith's four Sonatas composed over the course of his career for unaccompanied viola, the op. 25 no. 1 (hereafter 25/1) Sonata of 1922 has proven to have the greatest staying power. Frequently programmed by violists ever since its publication, it is also one of Hindemith's few *enfant terrible* works that garners more-or-less universal praise from critics and scholars. While the earlier solo Viola Sonata op. 11 no. 5 retains some synthesis of other composers' influences (Reger, Debussy, Bach¹⁷⁰), and even ventures somewhat into Expressionist atonality,¹⁷¹ 25/1 is unmistakably composed in Hindemith's emerging mature style.¹⁷²

David Neumeyer describes 25/1 as having a "frankly New Objective tone," referencing the *neue Sachlichkeit* style described in and characterizing other works from the same period.¹⁷³ While Neumeyer dates Hindemith as taking "his determined plunge" into *neue Sachlichkeit* in early 1923, in writing about another work written in 1922 (the op. 25 no. 3 Sonata for Solo Cello), he describes features also evident in 25/1:

¹⁷⁰ Neumeyer, 18.

¹⁷¹ Kemp, 9.

¹⁷² Op. 31 no. 4 (1923) remained unpublished for many years and continues to reside firmly in 25/1's shadow. Hindemith himself said it is "not as good as the other [op. 25 no. 1] and is much too difficult." The final solo Viola Sonata from 1937 is "the only solo sonata for a stringed instrument whose structure and form comply with the stylistic elements of Hindemith's middle period," which also puts it beyond the chronology of the present study. See Danuser, Hermann. Preface to *Hindemith, Sonata for Solo Viola op. 31 no. 4* and Preface to *Hindemith, Sonata for Solo Viola (1937)*. Mainz: Schott, 1992.

¹⁷³ Neumeyer, 18.

It blends features of traditional tonal or modal harmony with the careful, dense motivic development of the late romantics and Viennese expressionists, and with the anti-romantic irony, raucous unconcern for pretty colors, and objective formalism which characterizes Hindemith's New Objective music from 1923 on.¹⁷⁴

Certainly the “anti-romantic irony, raucous unconcern for pretty colors, and objective formalism” are prominent features in 25/1 as well. It would seem that stylistic features that came to be associated with the *neue Sachlichkeit* in the subsequent years were already evident in Hindemith's writings in 1922.

Moreover, in composing for the instrument that he knew so intimately, Hindemith was enacting the *neue Sachlichkeit* principle of crafting *Spielmuik* (‘player’s music’), in which, as Stephen Hinton remarks:

The sense of immediate presence coupled with a directly perceivable unity of composition and performance is apparent not only in the way the music was composed specifically for the occasion, for the instrument as well as for the composer himself, but also in the way that it actually seems, and at times probably was, conceived on the instrument. It is made to measure. Even the pitch structures are born of technical considerations...

It seems that the creative impulse was the act of playing itself: what comes out is dictated by the technical possibilities of the instrument and by the technique of playing it.¹⁷⁵

Hinton specifically cites that the repeated double-stopped fifths at the end of the second movement (see Example 18) are, “not composed as such but seem to grow out of the viola itself.”¹⁷⁶ This method of constructing music, in other words, is born of the viola’s innate construction – its natural tuning of fifths across its four strings – rather than born of an

¹⁷⁴ Neumeyer, 18.

¹⁷⁵ Hinton, 183-184.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

overriding principle of musical or harmonic organization. This excerpt cited in the second movement (see also Example 13) is but one example of Hindemith using a motto – rather than any centralized harmony or tonality – as the Sonata’s organizing structural framework.

Mottos as Tonal Framework

Many composers at this time were utilizing alternative devices – mottos, ostinatos or even dissonant prolongations – to replace the traditional tonal framework as the source of harmonic orientation. While Hindemith did this to some extent in 11/5, such devices become the primary source of tonal definition in 25/1.¹⁷⁷ If a motto is identified as either a recurring chord, figure, or short progression, then one of these alternative devices can be seen as the cornerstone to each of 25/1’s five movements: the three-chord motto which opens the first movement, a two-measure progression in the second movement, a two-measure rhythmic motto and fermata chord in the third movement, an unmistakable ostinato in the notorious fourth movement, and what Neumeyer calls, “a recurrent progression with bass-register definition” in the finale.¹⁷⁸ The final movement also has features that echo the slow movement within it, something Hindemith himself acknowledged.¹⁷⁹ Each of these mottos can be seen in the examples below:

¹⁷⁷ Neumeyer, 121.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ In discussing the genesis of 25/1, Hindemith said, “I developed the slow movement and composed the last movement as a recapitulation based on the slow movement.” See Tully Potter, Liner Notes, *The Recorded Viola, Volume I: The History of the Viola on Record*. Pearl Label, 1995: 38.



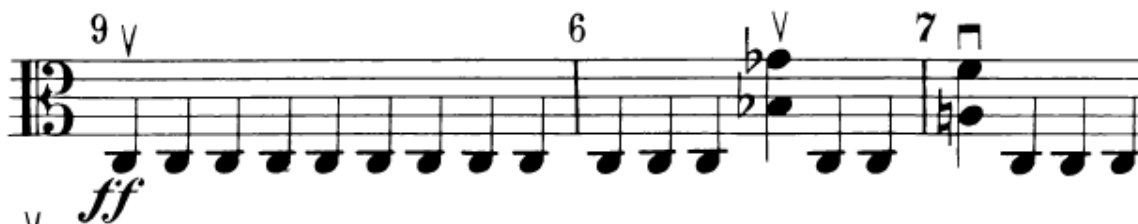
Example 12. Mvt I, three-chord motto,
op. 25 no. 1 Sonata



Example 13. Mvt II, two-measure progression,
op. 25 no. 1 Sonata



Example 14. Mvt III, two-measure rhythmic motto and fermata chord,
op. 25 no. 1 Sonata



Example 15. Mvt IV, C string ostinato,
op. 25 no. 1 Sonata



**Example 16. Mvt V, recurring progression,
op. 25 no. 1 Sonata**

While each movement lacks an obvious tonal center, these mottos function as a substitute for such anchoring. As Neumeyer says, “In this piece, the interpolations have become the whole fabric of the music.¹⁸⁰” This is evident in the closing measures of each of the first two movements, in which the mottos – by now firmly implanted in the listener through repetition and reiteration – are reduced in duration. Because of their function has been so established, the mottos retain their effect even in abbreviated form:



**Example 17. Mvt I, final measures,
op. 25 no. 1 Sonata**



**Example 18. Mvt II, final measures,
op. 25 no. 1 Sonata**

¹⁸⁰ Neumeyer, 121.

Ladislav Černý and the Genesis of op. 25 no. 1

Because of Hindemith's prominence as a performing violist himself, and because of his reputation as a prolific composer who, as Paul Bekker expressed in 1925, "does not compose at all, he makes music,"¹⁸¹ the origins of 25/1 have been somewhat misrepresented. Hindemith himself is partially responsible for this, perhaps because it served to further his burgeoning reputation. In his catalogue of works, he boasted that:

I composed the first and fifth movements in a buffet car between Frankfurt and Cologne and then went straight on to the platform and played the sonata.¹⁸²

Having seen in his earlier letters that Hindemith was certainly not one to be humble in detailing his achievements, this seems to be part of a conscious *neue Sachlichkeit* re-framing of the composer's role in the music-making process. As Taruskin notes, it "was turning matter-of-factness into a high artistic principle."¹⁸³ In simply creating *Spielmusik* for himself to perform, Hindemith was not some tortured Romantic soul waiting for inspiration, but a pragmatic and urbane modernist producing a practical means to an end. While such a narrative serves the (ironically) Romanticized vision of a *Gebrauchsmusik* composer admirably, it also simplifies the real story of the work's origin. In their musicological zeal for the context of *Gebrauchsmusik*, both Taruskin and Stephen Hinton make no mention of the preeminent violist to whom 25/1 is dedicated: the colorful Bohemian violist Ladislav Černý.

¹⁸¹ Hinton, 181.

¹⁸² As quoted in Hinton, 181.

¹⁸³ Taruskin, *OHWM* Vol. 4, 529.

Hindemith met Černý at – where else? – Donaueschingen, during the summer of 1922. They seemed to take an immediate liking to one another and be of similar disposition, for they remained lifelong friends.¹⁸⁴ Like Hindemith, Černý was the violist and principal organizer of his own string quartet. The Zika Quartet, as they were then known, championed new music and music of Czech origin.¹⁸⁵ Also like Hindemith, Černý was known to have a cheeky sense of humor and a larger-than-life personality.

Hindemith's recollections of that Donaueschingen summer and the genesis of 25/1 provide tremendous insight into both Hindemith's creative process and the invaluable role Černý had in realizing the Sonata:

We talked about the viola and its lack of repertoire. The music for this sonata had been simmering in my brain for some time...the fourth movement I had been using for quite a few years as my personal bowing etude and the second movement as a fingering exercise. The *Sehr Langsam* movement was still in my sketchbook, ready to be used. I showed these sketches to Černý and he told me to put them together, because they were very interesting...

At Černý's suggestion, I added the music which ended up as the second movement and also composed anew the *Praeludium* [first movement], based remotely on the influence of Bach...Of course he saw them almost as soon as I put them on paper...

He undertook, very diplomatically of course, to coach me into a better performance of the work from a technical point of view...He played all my works and included them in his teaching curriculum. He, of all my colleagues, saw more of Hindemith in the music than most.¹⁸⁶

While nothing Hindemith reveals here indicates compositional struggle, it does make abundantly clear that the development of 25/1 was a thoroughly collaborative process.

¹⁸⁴ Hindemith later reminisced that, "I had coffee with him one day and he was editing one of my compositions. I was amazed to see how he saw the music – like I did. He readjusted the dynamics here and there, and from that I could see what he was trying to achieve in the balance of the voices and the coloring." See Potter, Liner Notes, *The Recorded Viola Vol. I*, 38.

¹⁸⁵ Political turmoil led them to later be known as the Prague Quartet and the Černý Quartet.

¹⁸⁶ Potter, Liner Notes, *The Recorded Viola Vol. I*, 38.

Certainly it is a far remove from the simplistic tall-tale of the composer, en route to a performance, tossing a work off in a train car, thinking nothing of it before immediately performing it. Most revealing, however, is the warmth and regard Hindemith clearly has for Černý – that he would allow himself to be coached on his own work for his own instrument.

The (In)famous Fourth Movement



**Example 19. The ‘locomotive’ in Mvt IV,
op. 25 no. 1 Sonata**

Hindemith’s recollections on collaborating with Černý also reveal the humorous origins of the Sonata’s fourth movement:

The fourth movement, with all its meter changes and bowing difficulties, [Černý] also worked over. One day he came rushing over to where I was living, very excited, with his viola. He started to play this movement at a frenetic pace that was at first quite comical, but then he stopped when he saw me laughing and asked me why I was imitating a locomotive in the music. I couldn’t understand this but he played and pointed out some high A flats, and pretty soon I heard a train whistle a couple of times, or an imitation of one at least [see **Example 19**].

‘But my dear Černý, this only sounds like that because you are parodying my tempo markings and you are very rough and sloppy in doing so. No one would ever play like that.’

‘Certainly they will, if you put a fantastic metronome indication and tell them you don’t care how it sounds. It would be a virtuoso’s holiday and would give viola players one chance to show off.’

This is basically the genesis of that work. He got it into his fingers and played it privately for some of us and what he said was true.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Potter, Liner Notes, *The Record Viola Vol. I*, 38-39.

As Černý seems to have desired, the movement amounts to, according to Hinton, “not much more than a private letter to the performer to scrape his instrument as fast as he can.”¹⁸⁸

Hindemith did not hesitate in indicating the ‘fantastic metronome indication’ and witty performance directions. On top of the already fluid meter, it is to be played at the absurdly unplayable tempo of a quarter note = 600-640. The performance directions translate roughly to “Frantic tempo. Boisterous. Beauty of tone is unimportant.”¹⁸⁹

While this movement might be an extreme example, the staunchly anti-expressive stance of the performance indication was a position Hindemith shared with other modernists of the time (Stravinsky in particular). They sought to protect their music from the overly romanticized playing tendencies of the era’s performers. In one letter to his publisher, Hindemith complained that, “since all musicians have grown up with tiresome rubato-playing and ‘expression’-art, they nearly all play my things badly.”¹⁹⁰

Much like the first movement of *Kammermusik No. 1* explored in the previous chapter, the fourth movement of 25/1 has a radicalized, almost experimental design in its anti-developmental content:

The work seems to end because the player decides to finish. Repeated c’s are also what began the movement. But it is not like a resolution, a return home. The musical structure has not taken us purposefully to a conclusion. The music breaks off; theoretically it could go on forever. This kind of writing is

¹⁸⁸ Hinton, 182.

¹⁸⁹ As translated in Taruskin, *OHWM*, Vol. 4, 529. Hinton translates it similarly as, ‘Tearingly fast tempo. Wild. Beauty of tone is secondary.’ See Hinton, 182.

¹⁹⁰ Hinton, 182. It is assumed he did not feel this way about Černý’s playing.

appropriate, much beloved masterpiece of the viola repertoire. The fact that Hindemith collaborated with another accomplished performer in Černý to develop 25/1 both undermines and reinforces the solidity of Hindemith's *neue Sachlichkeit* public persona:

The performance aesthetic corresponds to the compositional aesthetic – which is anti-romantic, objective. The ideal solution was for the composer to perform his own works. Here was ultimate authenticity; here the intended unity of the text and its execution, of composition and interpretation, was guaranteed.¹⁹²

While perhaps a worthy ideal, this stance falls down in practice. After all, a single musician performing his own works will only see his music disseminated so far.

This is where a colleague and friend such as Černý became invaluable to sharing and spreading Hindemith's music. Černý, as Hindemith himself said, “played all of my works and included them in his teaching curriculum.”¹⁹³ As a teacher at the Prague Conservatory and later the Academy of Arts, Černý had a significant reach into new generations of violists in Czechoslovakia and throughout central Europe. He eventually recorded numerous Hindemith viola works, including the op. 11 no. 4 Sonata, and the later masterpieces *Der Schwanendreher* and *Trauermusik*. His earliest recording of 25/1 from the 1950s is described as “a performance of immense conviction, tremendous power and not a little virtuosity.”¹⁹⁴ This is all without factoring in his visibility as a performing violist, particularly in and around his hometown of Prague, where he was viewed, according to a cellist colleague, as “the first modern Czech string player.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Hinton, 182-183.

¹⁹³ Potter, Liner Notes, *The Recorded Viola Vol. I*, 38.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 41.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 37.

It is now time to examine the sort of work for solo viola that might be a product of such stylistic dissemination – one that follows the structural and idiomatic principles of Hindemith’s writing and Černý’s performing, but lacks that ‘ultimate authenticity’ of unifying text and execution so highly prized by the *Gebrauchsmusik* practitioners.

Vycpálek: Career Background and Oeuvre

Ladislav Vycpálek is a name known to scholars of Czech music, but not widely known beyond that circle. His high standing within Czech musical culture was confirmed by Czech music scholar John Tyrrell, who described Vycpálek as, “one of the most distinguished Czech composers of the century.¹⁹⁶” While he was often “isolated from the main currents of Czech music of the time,” his career as a composer was “remarkably direct and assured.¹⁹⁷”

Having studied German and Czech at Prague University from 1901-1906, Vycpálek obtained a post at the Prague University Library in 1907. He learned violin and piano at age six, and played in string quartets throughout his life – including thirty years as a regular member of an amateur quartet led by Josef Pick from 1909-1939. In 1908, Vycpálek began taking composition lessons with Vietezslav Novák. Novák was a highly respected composer and teacher – one regarded as helping forge a path for Czech modernism, in spite of the Romantic predilections of many of his own compositions. Jiří Vysloužil catalogs Novák as continuing a Smetana-based lineage of Czech music making:

¹⁹⁶ Tyrrell, John. *Janacek: Years of a Life, Volume 2 (1914-1928): Tsar of the forests*. Faber and Faber, 2007: 146.

¹⁹⁷ John Tyrrell, “Ladislav Vycpálek” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Second Edition*, Vol. 26. Stanley Sadie, ed. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers, 2001: 915.

A number of Czech composers of the 20th century, regardless of the generation or current they belonged to...took their stand on this Smetanian line of modern Czech music, even though they naturally kept shaping it individually in many ways and enriched it by new values and artistic processes. It was Novák – Vycpálek's teacher – who Helfert believed showed the highest degree of initiative in this manner.¹⁹⁸

Novák supervised all of Vycpálek's works up through op. 9. In 1917, Vycpálek ultimately had a falling out with his teacher due to his negative opinion of Novák's opera *The Lantern*. Novák's style had been growing more conservative (whether due to the War's impact or perhaps in reaction to his polemical battles with musicologist Zdeněk Nejedlý), and Vycpálek saw this as a betrayal of the intellectual, modernist values of the *Podskalská filharmonie*, the group of progressive artists that had formerly congregated around his teacher.

After the war and the resultant Czechoslovakian independence, Vycpálek founded the music department at the Prague University Library in 1922. He directed the department for twenty years, until his 1942 retirement. In addition to his compositional output, this remains his most lasting legacy: the music department continues to operate, now under the auspices of the National Library of the Czech Republic. Their present-day website details the content of their extensive holdings, which have been “systematically created from the establishment of the music department...thanks to the efforts of the founder of the music department, Ladislav Vycpálek (1882-1969).¹⁹⁹” Soon after, he began to hold other important cultural advisory positions maintained up until World War II: as a member of the Czech Academy,

¹⁹⁸ Vysloužil, Jiří. “Vladimir Helfert as a Critic of Music: Concerning the fight for a conception of Modern Czech music.” Trans. Lidmila Pantucková. http://digilib.phil.muni.cz/bitstream/handle/11222.digilib/111960/H_Musicologica_04-1969-1_5.pdf, 61-62.

¹⁹⁹ <http://www.en.nkp.cz/about-us/professional-activities/music/oh-holdings>

chairman of the music section of the Umělecká Beseda (a Czech civic arts association), and a member of the advisory committee of the National Theatre.²⁰⁰

All of these titles serve to show the preeminent standing Vycpálek had attained within Czech cultural circles by the mid-1920s. His actual output of works was relatively small – perhaps in part hindered by his other commitments, but also inhibited by “his own cautious and fastidious nature.”²⁰¹ Moreover, as Tyrrell notes:

It is surprising...that as an accomplished violinist and violist who played regularly in a quartet he did not write more instrumental music.²⁰²

This is true, for beyond the four string pieces written as ops. 19-22 in the late 1920s (of which the *Viola Suite* is one), Vycpálek only produced a Violin Sonatina of 1947, two small sets of piano pieces, an early string quartet and a late orchestral work. Otherwise, he was preoccupied with vocal genres, perhaps due to his extensive literary education.

The term most frequently affiliated with Vycpálek’s musical style is contrapuntal. His frequent use of Baroque formal devices and polyphonic writing certainly falls in line with the similar interests in Baroque forms already explored in the music of Reger and Hindemith. Vycpálek “had an almost passionate belief in the fugue and used it generously.”²⁰³ With polyphony and contrapuntal writing as such a foundational aspect of his style, Vycpálek was, unsurprisingly, an avid student of Bach. In fact, a case can be made that Bach had a more significant impact on Vycpálek’s mature works than did his teacher Novák. In spite of not

²⁰⁰ Tyrrell, *New Grove*, 914.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Tyrrell, *New Grove*, 915.

being a German, Vycpálek continues the early twentieth century thread of adapting Baroque techniques and forms to modern settings. Like Reger and Hindemith before him, it manifests itself in a rigorous and reverential study of Bach's scores, and in composing multi-movement works for unaccompanied strings.

Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21

In the *New Grove* entry for Vycpálek, John Tyrrell summarizes a number of the notable characteristics in the composer's style. His overview is useful in approaching the *Viola Suite*, for many of the features Tyrrell describes are present in that work:

Vycpálek's harmonic texture derives almost entirely from contrapuntal complications. Consecutive dissonant formations are frequent and, especially in the interwar years, there are many passages of considerable bitonal tension, or momentary atonality. The lack of clear diatonic polarity in his music meant that the sonata form had little appeal... Vycpálek's melody, too, is shaped by contrapuntal necessity. It is frequently modal, lacking tonal drive and clear periodicity. His instrument writing is similarly conditioned by the claims of balanced and blended contrapuntal voices rather than imaginative and vivid colors.²⁰⁴

With sonata form having little appeal to Vycpálek as a formal structure, it follows that he would title a work for unaccompanied viola as a suite and not a sonata, the genre Hindemith employed with such frequency. Instead, the composer suggested a "tragic dialogue" between a man and a woman was the inspiration for the music.²⁰⁵ The *Suite* received its premiere performance in 1930, with Jirí Herold of the Bohemian Quartet performing.

²⁰⁴Tyrrell, *New Grove*, 915.

²⁰⁵Woolf, Jonathan. "Review." *Fanfare*, 35/2 (November 2011): 643.

First movement – Moderato assai

With its opening statement of a forceful, dissonant, two-chord motto that returns throughout the first movement, one cannot help but have the opening of Hindemith's 25/1 in the back of one's mind. As Hindemith does in that work, Vycpálek utilizes the two-chord motto as a framing device within the movement's structure. It acts as an opening declaration, as a dramatic arrival or return point, and as something resembling a cadential gesture. Indeed, the motto fulfills each of these roles within the first eleven measures of the piece:



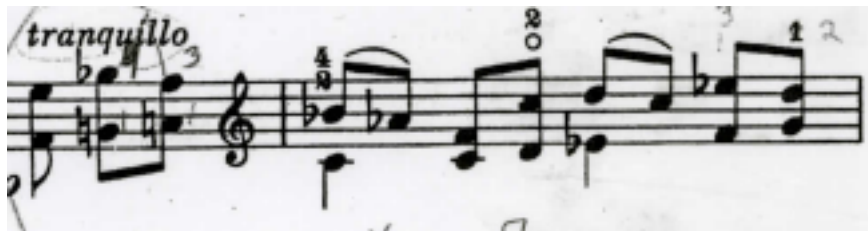
Example 21. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, m. 1-11

With the motto's varied functions in this passage, Vycpálek also varies the motto's content with its restatements: at the downbeat arrival of mm. 4 and 10, he alters the motto's rhythm, while both rhythm and harmony are altered in the downbeat of m. 11. This is an example of what Tyrrell referred to as Vycpálek's harmonic texture stemming "almost entirely from

contrapuntal complications.²⁰⁶ In this case, his sense of chorale voice leading produces the first diatonic triad of the piece. This is possible without any alteration of the upper line, which descends from G to D again, as it did in previous iterations of the motto. The triplet and sixteenth note passages that link the motto statements to one another evoke the *détaché* figuration sequences seen in other Baroque-influenced string writing of the era, with additional accent marks throughout.

This is not music written with a timid player in mind. Exploiting the dark and powerful timbres of the viola's lower three strings, this opening gesture introduces the *Suite* with a forceful sweep. While Vycpálek had a good idiomatic knowledge of the instrument through his own playing experience, he may have also had the strong, robust tones of contemporary players like Hindemith and Černý in mind.

Following the dramatic arrival of the G triad in m. 11, a contrasting section marked *tranquillo* showcases Vycpálek's skillful contrapuntal writing and some highly expressive dissonances under a strident eighth note melody that seems harmonically derived from the motto:



²⁰⁶ Tyrrell, *New Grove*, 915.



Example 22. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, m. 11-14

The A^b-G dissonance on the downbeats of m. 13 and 14 evokes the opening chord's interval, right down to the open string in the bass line. One wonders whether Vycpálek opted for the open G string in the bass over a fingered C, which would have replicated the opening chord precisely at the higher octave, for the sake of the open string's additional resonance or the slightly easier technical execution of the passage. Whatever the case may be, the triplets of the opening phrase return to build sequentially towards a restatement of this eighth note melody – now marked *Più mosso, animoso*. The expressive dissonances of the melody are combined with the descending triplet and sixteenth figurations of the opening phrase to arrive at the most ornamented statement of the motto yet, functioning here again as a cadence:



Example 23. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, m. 23-25

The ornamented version of the motto here serves a similar function to its statement in m. 11. The difference here is that in place of the straight G triad of m. 11, the triad here is implied, yet never directly stated due to the C pedal and the passing tone A.

The following section is motivically derived from the *tranquillo* of m. 11. In both cases, this material follows the cadential elaborations of the motto. This second version is considerably denser in its polyphonic voicing – illustrating Vycpálek’s penchant for creative and thoughtful harmonies based on contrapuntal principles:



Example 24. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, m. 25-31

In this dense harmonic world, Tyrrell’s insights about the composer’s tendency towards “passages of considerable bitonal tension, or momentary atonality” ring true.²⁰⁷ While numerous tonal centers are hinted at in such a passage, the anchoring chord is the perfect

²⁰⁷ Tyrrell, *New Grove*, 915.

fifth of the G-D open strings. Not only does this fifth occur on the downbeats of both m. 26 and 27, but its placement on the fourth beat of m. 27 seems to interrupt a digressive move towards D^b major. The following two measures are the most chromatic, even atonal, of the movement – perhaps of the entire Suite. While the harmony does not center on any particular tonality here, the descending motion of m. 29 does lead back to the G-D anchor. As the G-D chord maneuvers into a restatement of the 2-chord motto in its original form, it becomes apparent that the G-D anchor chord was functioning as a substitute for the motto. It fulfilled an equivalent, if abbreviated, role throughout the preceding passage of dense harmonic and contrapuntal motion. This is not unlike the filtered down versions of the mottos seen earlier in Hindemith's 25/1 Sonata:



**Example 25. Three-chord motto and reduced statement of motto, I,
Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1**

Vycpálek's use of this technique is undoubtedly a subtler example than Hindemith's equivalent uses in 25/1, which does seem to reflect the contrasting personalities of the two men. The passage of Example 24 also seems to correlate with Tyrrell's assessment of

Vycpálek's instrumental music often being "conditioned by the claims of balanced and blended contrapuntal voices rather than imaginative and vivid colors."²⁰⁸

The movement's ending once more outlines the G and A^b-G seventh chord derived from the motto, before chromatic contrary motion produces an unanticipated final cadence:



Example 26. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, ending

While the concluding C major chord has a triumphant sense of arrival and finality, it also alters the complexion of how the motto has been heard throughout the movement prior. In a clever turn, these final measures recast the motto not as the primary anchoring point itself – as it has been up until this point in the piece – but as a dominant function resolving to a C major tonic. By extension, the entire movement can be reread as a rhapsodic prelude built around a 2-chord motto, based on G as the dominant. Such a reading gives a sense of journeying to an ultimate destination through the movement as well, with the final chord representing an arrival to a previously unattained plane.

Subsequent movements

The second movement (*con moto*), a *moto perpetuo* fulfilling the role of a Scherzo within the Suite, follows a similar journey to the first movement. With the entire movement centered on the pitch D, the final chord is an octave G. This suggests the same dominant function for D throughout this movement as seen with the 2-chord motto in the first

²⁰⁸ Tyrrell, *New Grove*, 915.

movement, with the central pitch/motto of the entire movement ultimately serving as a V leading to the ending tonic cadence (in this case, on G).

The second movement is largely in the detached bariolage style, similar to that seen employed by both Hindemith and Bach last chapter (see Examples 10 and 11).²⁰⁹ String crossings are essential to this technique being effective, as is a deft use of open strings as pedal tones. On both counts, Vycpálek demonstrates a knack for virtuosic flair and an idiomatic understanding of the viola's capabilities:



Example 27. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, II, ending

The slow movement of the Suite (Lento) strikes an elegiac tone, with chant-like melodic lines growing in expressivity and range to an impassioned middle section, before withdrawing again to an intimate, darkly timbred resignation. Throughout, the melodic lines are interspersed with a two-chord fermata gesture, which might be termed the motto of the movement. This motto is always marked *pp*, characterized by its fifths in the instrument's

²⁰⁹ This technique can also be seen in the opening movement of Hindemith's op. 31 no. 4 Sonata, written in 1923. Additionally, it is employed to great effect in Krzysztof Penderecki's much later *Cadenza* for Viola Solo (1984), which in spite of its far later composition date, seems to share a kinship with unaccompanied string works of this era due to its structure, use of dissonance, and Baroque formal devices.

upper register. As with many of the first movement's motto statements, here no two statements are identical – though they are unmistakably interconnected:



Example 28. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, III, motto statements

If the Suite's finale lacks some of the charm and originality of the other movements, it nevertheless provides ample showcase for the composer's contrapuntal skill and a performer's technical mastery. Cast in a large-scale ABA form, the movement's jaunty and boisterous momentum seems inspired by folk fiddling. While it would never be mistaken for Bartók, there are elements here similar to those seen in the titular final movement of Hindemith's *Der Schwanendreher* (which does take its inspiration from a folk tune), written several years later. The music has an appealing triple-metered energy in the A sections, but it

seems to lack the directional pull of the earlier movements. That it is the lone movement of the Suite to begin and end on the same pitch (G) means Vycpálek perhaps overcompensated in attempts to stray from the pull of that key center. Consider the coda, arrived at via an endless sequence of key areas and chromatic contrary motion:



Example 29. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, IV, final measures

The penultimate G triad does not feel ‘earned;’ it is simply stated. And while the final G-D chord reemphasizes the centrality of that interval from the opening movement, providing some cyclic closure, it is hardly prepared for in the preceding 190 measures.

Concluding Thoughts

Despite quibbling over some shortcomings of form and content, Vycpálek crafted a thoughtful and rich contribution to the viola’s solo repertoire. He utilizes a firsthand knowledge of the instrument to great effect, culling creative and challenging passagework from his endless contrapuntal explorations. The Suite would certainly seem to owe something to Hindemith’s solo Sonatas, stemming from both stylistic commonalities and cultural proximity.

Any evidence of direct influence from Hindemith is largely speculative, but there are two sources that may have provided Vycpálek with impetus and inspiration for composing his own Suite for the viola. The first is the prominence of Černý – champion of Hindemith’s viola works and highly visible violist based in Prague. There can be little doubt that leading

musical figures – such as Černý and Vycpálek were in 1920s Prague – would have come into contact, or at least been aware of each other's activities.

Beyond this commonality of locus, all three men (Vycpálek, Černý and Hindemith) found themselves at the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) Chamber Music Festivals in both 1924 (in Salzburg) and 1925 (in Venice). At both Festivals – which occurred after the writing of Hindemith's first three solo viola Sonatas and before the writing of Vycpálek's Suite – each composer had a work performed, and Černý was in residence performing with the Zika Quartet.²¹⁰ This offers another compelling argument that Vycpálek may have taken some influence or inspiration from observing and interacting with the leading German composer of the day, particularly when it came to writing instrumental music – an arena in which Vycpálek, for whatever reason, appeared less comfortable (he had vocal works performed at both ISCM Festivals).

If Vycpálek's Suite will likely never attain the status of Hindemith's viola works as a central component of the instrument's repertoire, it surely deserves a seat at the table. At present, it does not even enjoy that. In many ways, its now-historical anonymity appears to be an extension of the attitudes towards Vycpálek's career in general. John Tyrrell's words again make a compelling case for why it may be time for that notion to shift:

His disciplined approach and consistent artistic success meant that within 15 years of his first composition he had, steadily and organically, found a very personal style that fitted his needs exactly. If it lacked charm and seemed narrow in its emotional range, this was more than compensated for by the

²¹⁰ The Amar Quartet was also at the 1924 Festival, but not the 1925 Festival. See Bodmer, Daniel. *Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM): Ihre Geschichte von 1922 bis zur Gegenwart*. Zurich: Atlantis Musikbuch-Verlag, 1982: 482-484.

depth and seriousness of his conceptions, the technical mastery of their execution, and his eloquent brand of spiritual luminosity.²¹¹

As touched on in Chapter III, English-speaking scholars and international performers have been returned to Reger's music after decades of neglect. During those decades of neglect, the composer was long seen as little more than a national-provincial footnote – not unlike how Vycpálek is presently perceived. As a result of new generations championing the cause, Reger's life and career are being examined anew, with a noticeable shift in priorities and appreciation. A similar trajectory appears possible with the life and career of Vycpálek.

This document began with seeking out the broader socio-cultural trends that influenced various aesthetic sensibilities of the early twentieth century. In turn, these sensibilities fostered an environment where unaccompanied string genres – and in particular solo viola works – experienced a flourishing of activity. One of the cornerstone components, common across all of these strains of emergent modernism, was the persistent feeling among younger composers of having to reckon with the hegemonic influence of nineteenth century historicism and the museum culture. Whether a twentieth century composer sought to work within this culture or rebel against it, all had to reconcile with its omnipresence.

The irony, from the twenty-first century perspective, is that many of these early twentieth-century modernists – Debussy, Stravinsky, Hindemith, etc. – have since become engulfed and championed by the very same historicist cultural lineage. Rescuing the legacy of those composers forgotten in the interim – the Regers and Vycpáleks of the world – is in

²¹¹ Tyrrell, *New Grove*, 915.

keeping with the spirit those modernist sensibilities were promoting, of original voices employing past traditions in contemporary contexts.

Composers and musicians today must continue to reckon with a pervading sense of historicism and a hegemonic museum culture. While some of this dominance has been undermined by the emerging digital age, reconciliation is still necessary, much as it was to modernists at the turn of the twentieth century. An understandable – even necessary – outgrowth of this process of reconciliation is the continued source of inspiration that composers find in reviving long-dormant traditions within contemporary contexts. Such artistic practices – in all their varied socio-cultural and genre settings – are invaluable in perpetuating and reinvigorating traditions, and have proven integral in ensuring a true and lasting cultural and musical vitality. The flourishing of solo works for the viola in the early twentieth century is but one example, among many, of this phenomenon manifest.

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Appendix I – Musical Examples

III. Examining the Aesthetics and Solo Viola Works of Max Reger

- Example 1. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, IV, m. 1-2
- Example 2. J.S. Bach, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001, IV, m. 1-6
- Example 3. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, I, m. 1-2
- Example 4. J.S. Bach, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001, I, m. 1-2
- Example 5. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, I, m. 32-34
- Example 6. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, I, m. 3-4/m. 29-30
- Example 7. Reger, Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola in G Minor, op. 131d, II, m. 1-8

IV. The Early Career of Paul Hindemith: His Compositional and Performing Life until 1929

- Example 8. Hindemith, String Quartet in F Minor, op. 10, II, m. 1-12
- Example 9. Hindemith, Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 11 no. 4, III, from Variation VI:
Fugato, mit bizarrer Plumpheit vorsutragen
- Example 10. Hindemith, Sonata for Solo Viola, op. 11 no. 5, IV, *In Form und Zeitmass
einter Passacaglia*, m. 53-64
- Example 11. Bach, Violin Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006, I

V. Hindemith's Sonata for Solo Viola, op. 25 no. 1 and Ladislav Vycpálek's Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21

- Example 12. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, I, three-chord motto
- Example 13. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, II, two-measure progression
- Example 14. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, III, two-measure rhythmic motto and fermata chord
- Example 15. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, IV, C string ostinato
- Example 16. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, V, recurring progression
- Example 17. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, I, final measures

- Example 18. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, II, final measures
- Example 19. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, IV, the 'locomotive'
- Example 20. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, IV, m. 14-19
- Example 21. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, m. 1-11
- Example 22. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, m. 11-14
- Example 23. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, m. 23-25
- Example 24. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, m. 25-31
- Example 25. Hindemith, Sonata op. 25 no. 1, I, three-chord motto and reduced statement of motto
- Example 26. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, I, ending
- Example 27. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, II, ending
- Example 28. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, III, motto statements
- Example 29. Vycpálek, Suite for Solo Viola, op. 21, IV, final measures